FREE VIDEOS!

MONTHLY COVERAGE OF FANTASTIC FILMS · No 97 · SEP · U.S. CAN. $3.60 $4.75 · £1·20

STARBURST™

ALIENS

Block-buster Special Preview

ET re-dials

DOCTOR WHO Revelations of the Script Editor

HIGHLANDER Director Interview

ENEMY MINE Star interview

STAR TREK News on new TV show

PLUS

WIN Gerry Anderson Videos

WIN The Stuff Video

WIN Film Set Visit

SCIENCE FICTION ★ FANTASY ★ HORROR ★ CINEMA ★ TV ★ VIDEO

Front Cover photograph is from *Aliens* released in the Cinema late August

STARBURST
Volume 9 Number 1
September 1986 issue

Editor
Stephen Payne

Assistant Editor
Jan Vincent-Rudzki

Production Assistant
Andy Shore

Advertising
Kelly Dyson

Contributing Writers
Jon Ainsworth
Tony Crawley
David Dupont
David Howe
Alan Jones
Andrew Lane
Paul Mount
Peter Newall
Timothy Robins
Andrew Sewell

Typesetting
James Jenkins

Publisher
Visual Imagination

Thanks especially to the various people at the film distributors offices

Editorial Address
Starburst
Visual Imagination
38 Melrose Avenue
Wimbledon Park
London SW19 8BY

All letters, articles and photographs for possible publication are welcome. We will return items if a SAE is included but no responsibility can be undertaken for loss or damage. For subscription information see page 50. Advertising rates on application.

Distribution: Comag, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE
Tel: 0895 444055

Printed by
Riverside Press Limited, Whitstable

STARBURST

CONTENTS

Things to Come 4
The latest news of fantasy films and television

Video Competition 8
Ten Gerry Anderson videos to be won!

TV Zone 9
Terrahawks, Captain Katt and television films

Preview 10
Previewed this month: *A Nightmare on Elm Street, Part II, Crawlspace, Spookies, Maxie and Frankenstein '88*

Revelations of a Script Editor 16
Eric Saward gives his reasons for walking out of the new crucial *Doctor Who* season

Enemy Mine 22
Star Dennis Quaid interviewed

Aliens 26
Special preview and short interview with special effects guy Brian Johnson

E.T. 30
We catch *E.T.* re-dialling!

Fantasy NFT 32
A report on the recent fantasy weekend

Highlander 34
The second part of an interview with Director, Russell Mulcahy

Video Competition 38
Ten copies of *The Stuff* to be won

Fantasia 39
A new fan section with convention listings

Its Only a Movie 40
What's pre-fi?

Cats in Space 42
An interview with Peter Grimwade – writer/director

Fantasy and Horror Bookshelf 44
A monthly review of fantasy and horror books

Feedback 46
Your views and comments

Quiz 49
The second part of a super three-part quiz that you cannot afford to miss!

Back page 52
A deserted outer-space city from *Aliens*

Poltergeist II: 'The Other Side': coming soon to *Starburst*

THINGS TO COME

'Lost' on ITV!

The latest cult show to be resuscitated on British TV is the wacky 60s series *Lost in Space*. ITV's film buyer, Leslie Halliwell, confirmed that the rights to screen the series were under negotiation with 20th Century Fox to begin on Channel Four in Autumn 1987. The package will be finalised in November, and until then Halliwell will not be able to confirm whether the whole series will be taken (including the b&w first season) or just colour episodes.

Robin's Film & Video

Following the success of their third series of *Robin of Sherwood*, HTV are determined not to lose one of their most viable projects. Paul Knight's attempts to find new backing for a fourth series, in the wake of Goldcrest's withdrawal, unfortunately met with failure. Although the option for another series will be kept open for some time to come, in the interim, Knight hopes to keep the series very much in the public eye and various companies have been tendered with a view to financing a *Sherwood* feature film – for the cinema. However, there will be no definite decisions taken until mid-September – so stay tuned.

Videos of the *Robin of Sherwood* double episodes have been released in the US and should be on sale in Britain by the end of the year. The episodes will be the introductory story *Robin Hood and the Sorceror* and *The Swords of Wayland* starring Michael Praed, and from this year under Jason Connery, *Herne's Son* and *The Time of the Wolf*.

Aliens a hit!

Aliens, due for release in Britain on the 29th August, was released in America in July, and took $10,052,042 in the first three days. There are reports of vast queues at theatre box offices and all is set for *Aliens* to make record takings. It is set to gross at least $100 million which will classify it a true "blockbuster"

Star, Sigourney Weaver, was paid a million dollars for the film. Now with the film set to be a blockbuster her cunning agent has upped her asking price to two million.

Star Trek's new Trek!

Star Trek looks likely to go into production for a new television series! The man behind this is none other than Robert Maxwell, owner of 'The Times' and 'Sun' newspapers. He is at present setting up a fourth television network in the States called 'Fox Television' which has asked Paramount to produce a completely fresh series of *Star Trek*.

It is rumoured that the series would have a completely new cast with only Leonard Nimoy from the original cast involved.

Who Saved?

The 'Sun' has printed an unconfirmed report that *Doctor Who* has been given the go ahead for further series after the "Trial" series which starts this September.

Charles Band's Empire Marches On

Charles Band's Empire Entertainment company continues to expand.

The frequency of Empire's production/release schedules is accelerating as planned with over twenty films due to reach our screens this year. Not all of the films are intended for cinema distribution as the direct video market can pay out faster returns, which for movies budgeted at 1-3 million dollars guarantees substantial profits and has proved to be the cornerstone of Empire's success. In most instances this is no great loss (ie Peter Mangoonian's *Eliminators,* recently available on video here), and promises to keep the average video junkie content if not entertained.

Several of Empire's flicks are now being made in New York, supervised by former gay hardcore director Tim Kincaid, the self-styled auteur of such sleazy epics as *Riot on 42nd Street* and *Bad Girl's Dormitory. Both Matt Riker-Mutant Hunt* and *Breeders* were shot back-to-back on ten-day schedules at the end of last year with Ed French (*Chud*) and Tom Lauten (*Starman*) supplying the animatronics and make-up effects. These were followed by *Necropolis,* directed by one Bruce Hickey, and starring Leighanne Baker from *Breeders.* Yet another zombie flick, *Necropolis* has the dubious distinction of featuring an eight-breasted woman who suckles demonds. Mammarian feat courtesy of Ed French. Kincaid's next production is *Robot Holocaust* and should be ready for release by the autumn. This, too, will be a direct video film. French and Lauten provide the androids.

Currently shooting at the Empire studios in Rome is *Spellcaster,* directed by Rafal Zielinski, an occult adventure starring none other than Adam Ant, from a story by Ed Naha. In Hollywood Stuart (*Re-Animator*) Gordon starts lensing *Robojox* (working title), a sci-fi action picture about robot warriors who decide the fate of nations, in Septemer. This has the biggest budget to date for an Empire movie – 7 milion dollars – and won't be ready for release until late '87 due to the numerous stop-motion effects created by David Allen.

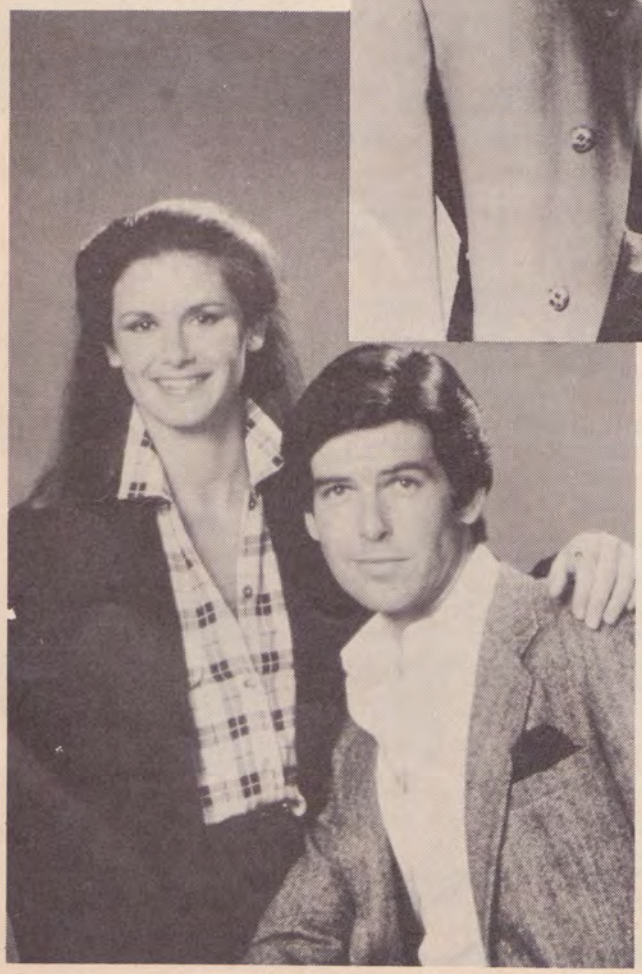
Meanwhile, Ed Naha, the former Fangoria editor turned scriptwriter, is putting the final touches to *Ghoulies 2,* also due to start mid-September. John Buechler (*Troll*) was originally announced as director but has now backed out.

With Stuart Gordon's *The Dolls* and *From Beyond* also awaiting distribution we are in for a full winter.

Philip Nutman

Bond's Problems

Pierce Brosnan, who is hopeful of becoming the next James Bond, is currently appearing on Channel 4 in *Remington Steel.* All had seemed set for Brosnan to take over the Bond role when NBC-TV of America cancelled the series. However it has now changed its mind, ordering six more shows as a mid season replacement. Brosnan has a seven year contract with the makers of the show, Mary Tyler Moore, and is obligated to the series. The filming for the new season and the next Bond, *The Living Daylights,* are both planned for September. What with *The Living Daylights* being filmed in Cairo and *Remington Steel* in Los Angeles, there would seem to be a rather difficult problem even though production companies are trying to accommodate both. Apparently Brosnan has threatened not to show up for *Remington Steel* which would certainly put pressure on MTM despite their contract!



One person without any problems for appearing in the next Bond film is Jeroen Krabbe. He's been cast as the villain. He originates from Holland with various international (ie US) roles to his credit.

UK Shooting

September sees the start of filming in Britain of three features of interest for *Starburst* readers. The rather silly titled film *Who Shot Roger Rabbit?* being jointly made by Disney and Spielberg's Ambin. Cannon's *Superman IV* and hopefully the 15th Bond film.

Empire

Charles Band and his Empire films have presented a festival devoted to him at the ICA, London. The festival has an amusing if long title of "Empire of the Senseless: Low-Budget High-Concept style Movies from Empire Films". Films such as *Re-Animator, Tracers, Parasite, Troll* and *Eliminators* are being shown. The festival started 4th August and goes on until 6th September.

Masters

Masters of the Universe, based on toys from Mattel, is to be filmed by Cannon in the United States in July next year. Dolph Lungren has been cast in the starring role.

Walt's Basil

Nothing to do with the waiter's pet rat in 'Faulty Towers', Basil is the mouse star of a new Disney film. Originally called *Basil of Baker Street,* it has now been retitled *The Great Mouse Detective.* Rumour has it that the change was because of the poor box office takings of Spielberg's *Young Sherlock Holmes.* Vincent Price voices the baddie of the Disney film and camps it up wonderfully. The film was made in half the normal time thanks to the use of a computer. Release is set for November.

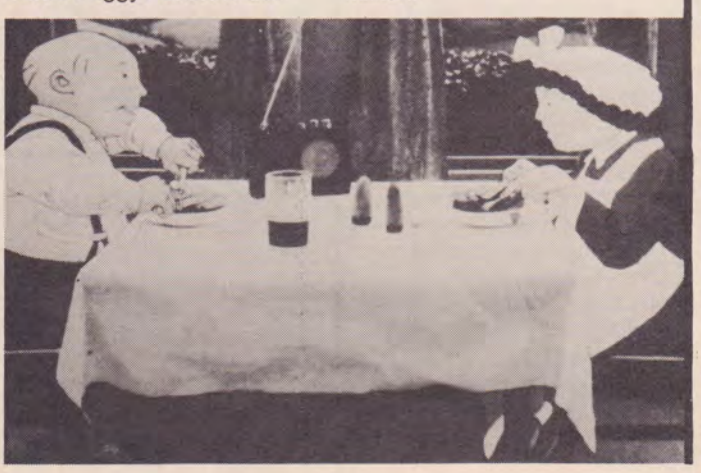
WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

Based on the best-selling book by Raymond Briggs a full-length animated feature film is now being completed for release throughout the UK in October.

When the Wind Blows is a touching and comic story of Jim and Hilda Bloggs, a plump and homely retired couple living peacefully in the countryside, who eat sausages and chips for lunch and drink lots of cups of tea. Nuclear attack is imminent, but Jim has got the relevant county council leaflets and builds a fall-out shelter in the living room. The authorities will, of course, look after them when the bomb is dropped . . . and it is . . . with horrifying consequences.

Hilda's voice is provided by Dame Peggy Ashcroft and Jim's by Sir John Mills – the first time they have worked together. The title track is written and recorded by David Bowie and their main score is by Roger Waters of Pink Floyd with a further contribution from Paul Hardcastle, and other artists to be announced. This will form the basis of a sound-track album which will be released to coincide with the launch of the film.

When the Wind Blows is being produced at the TVC Studios in London by John Coates, famous for *Yellow Submarine* and the Oscar-nominated *The Snowman* and directed by Jimmy Murakami, the Japanese/Irish film maker. A team of over 100 animators have been working on the project for nearly two years, hand-drawing the 190,000 frames needed, at a cost of £2 million.



BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

Creepshow II Begins September

Pre-production on the sequel to George A. Romero's Stephen King anthology *Creepshow* is nearing completion. Again produced by Laurel Entertainment, the new film will follow the format of its predecessor using the framing device of the E.C.-inspired horror comic and character of the Creep. Director is Michael Gornick, Romero's cinematographer who cut his teeth on two episodes of the third season of *Tales from the Darkside.* Due to previous commitments Tom Savini will not be creating the gruesome make-up effects; that honour goes to Ed French and Tom Lauten. Instead of using an animatronic puppet of the Creep, French will play the ghoul under a thick layer of latex. As to what stories will be shot, we'll just have to wait and see. Expect the movie here next summer.

London Openings

King Kong – 1st August
Troll – 4th August
Tancers – 4th August
Aliens – 29th August
Eliminator – 1st September
Terror Vision – 1st September
Poltergeist II – 12th September
F/X – 19th September
Vamp – October
Psycho II – 31st October
Friday 13th Part V – November
Howard the Duck – 28th November
Labyrinth – November
Solarbabies – 12th December
Star Trek IV – 10th April

Now what's the betting that at least some of these get changed? I am sure the *Star Trek* fans will be none too pleased that Britain will again have to wait four months after the US release.

New US TV Fantasy

Starman

This new autumn sci-fi series is based on the successful same name cinema film with Robert Hays in the lead role. In a previous trip to Earth 'Starman' had an affair with an earth lady who has since died leaving their 14 year old son an orphan.

'Starman' returns on a resue mission having assumed the identity of a photo-journalist who died on a space assignment and explains the switch by announcing that the photographer had a miracle escape in the disaster that killed the other astronauts.

All are fooled except one US government scientist. 'Starman' and his son team up and the plot-line develops around their adventures as they escape capture by the suspicious scientist.

With a plot like that we suspect it will be quickly cancelled!

ALF

NBC have this fantasy offering in their Autumn line-up. *Alf* is a creature from outer space. he crash-lands into the home of an ordinary American family who upon seeing this Alien Life Form decide to call him ALF for short!

Alf looks like a cross between a ginger-cat and a kangaroo, so clearly no relation to E.T. (Oh yeah!) Looking like that *Alf* could only speak with a Brooklyn accent and he soon has mom, dad and the kids in a tissy.

Well, this at least sounds fun!

Wizard

Wizard of Elm Street is a fantasy adventure starting this autumn in the States. It stars David Rappaport as Simon McKay, an inventive genius who specialises in producing unusual mechanical toys.

Two government agents are assigned to protect this prodigy in case he falls "into the wrong hands". Simon McKay feels this is OTT, but goes off with bodyguards to South America in search of a friend's lost mother.

Just how do they come up with these plots?

A-Team

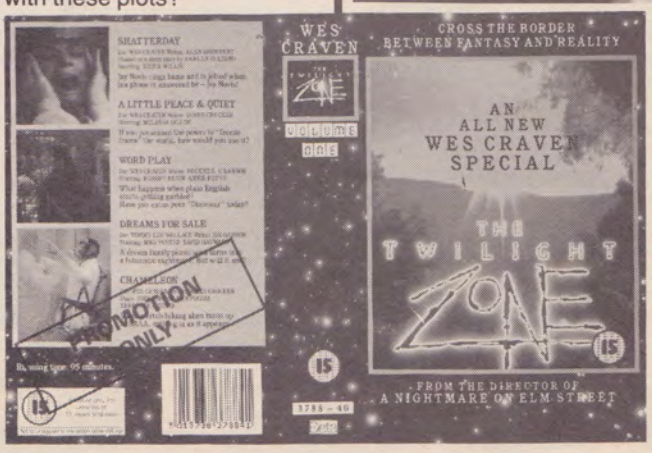
Well, I suppose *A-Team* is fantasy, well certainly fantastic. The news is that a fifth season has been made and it has an extra cast member – Robert Vaughn. Mr Vaughn is best known for his role in *The Man from Uncle*. Here he will play a mysterious government official in charge of future A-Team operations.

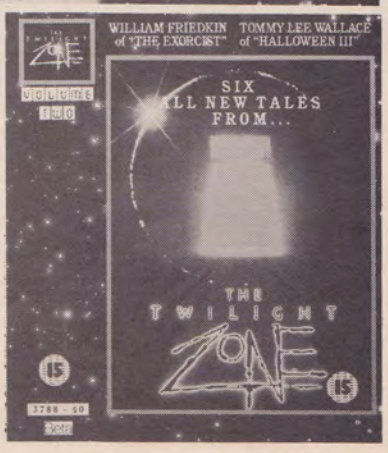
VIDEO

D.A.R.Y.L. first theatrically released in March is to see a video release on 19th September. In *Starburst* 92 Alan Jones said, "Although very derivative, with echoes of *E.T.* and *War Games* for example, *D.A.R.Y.L.* is a quite charming lightweight diversion."

Walt Disney may release the 1959 animated classic *Sleeping Beauty* on video this Christmas.

Legend, is released on video come September. Following on from *Eliminators* and *Troll. Terror Vision* is released 29th August. The Australian film *The Quiet Earth* was released at the end of July. *The Stuff* and the new American television series *The Twilight Zone* (two tapes) were both released at the end of July. BBC's *Doctor Who – Day of the Daleks* and *Blake's Seven – Orac* were released on 21st July. The cartoon series *Thunderbirds 2086* was released in July. *Explorers* previewed recently in *Starburst* is seeing light on video (released 25th July) rather than a cinema release we felt it deserved. Channel 5 Video are planning to release all of *The Prisoner* episodes probably starting in October. And finally Channel 5 Video have also released nine Gerry Anderson tapes for which we have a competition in this issue.





Free Video! Free Video!

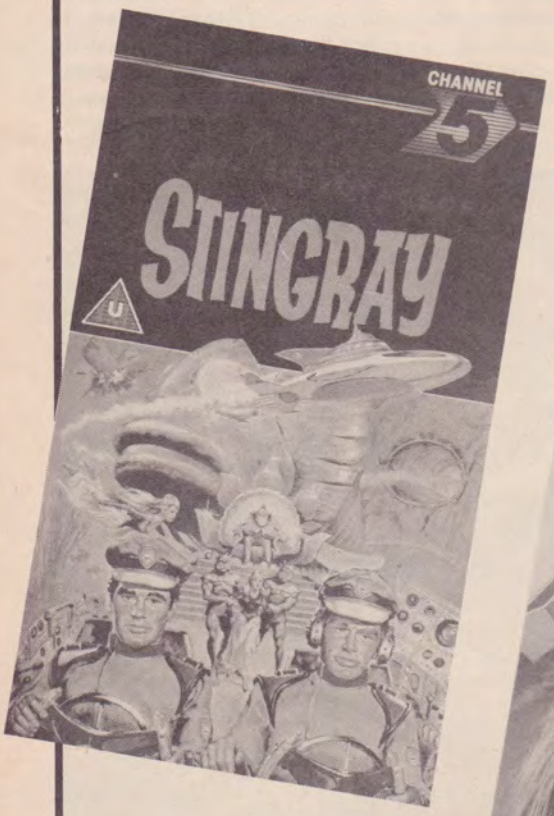
Competition – Gerry Anderson Videos

Channel 5 are one of the pioneers of the less than ten pound video. In June they got a surprise – their video of *Thunderbirds – Countdown to Disaster* was by a considerable margin their fastest-selling title! It beat *Sophie's Choice, McVicar,* David Bowie's *Serious Moonlight* and *The Return of the Pink Panther.* There are now nine Gerry Anderson videos available:

The Incredible Voyage of Stingray
Thunderbirds – Countdown to Disaster
Thunderbirds in Outer Space
Captain Scarlet – Revenge of the Mystrons from Mars
The Amazing Adventures of Joe 90
Space 1999 – Destination Moonbase Alpha
Terrahawks
Terrahawks 2: The Menace from Mars
Terrahawks 3: Terror from Mars

Starburst offers you a chance to win one of these VHS videos Just answer the six *Thunderbirds* questions below correctly and send your entry in to us by 26th August. The ten winners will be picked at random from our rubbish bin, the rest will remain there! Please remember to note down on your entry which video you would like.

1. Who was the scientist genius living on Tracy Island?
2. How many sons did Jeff Tracy have?
3. How many *Thunderbird* craft were we to see?
4. Who was International Rescue's London agent?
5. What pod in Thunderbird 2 did Thunderbird 4 travel in?
6. Who was International Rescue's most deadly enemy?



Postcards please to:
Starburst (Anderson Videos)
38 Melrose Avenue
Wimbledon Park
LONDON SW19 8BY

BY PAUL MOUNT

Terrahawks

TERRAHAWKS! The very name is certain to strike terror, not into the android hearts of the hideous Zelda, her monstrous offspring and assorted alien minions, but into those of literally thousands of sad-faced Gerry Anderson fans. These blinkered beings will scuttle off into the nostalgiac sanctuary of their battered plastic Thunderbirds and die-cast Spectrum Pursuit Vehicles at the merest mention of Doctor 'Tiger' Nine-stein or a Treehawk. While they're sobbing into their International Rescue suits trying to pretend *Terrahawks* is a bad dream they're missing a comic treat.

The final batch of *Terrahawks* episodes have recently received a long-overdue screening on the ITV Network. Unfortunately, if typically, ITV have seen fit to bury the series in the Dead Zone of Saturday morning where it trails in the wake of yet another collection of mental retards and speech-defectives who try to pass themselves off as 'children's entertainment'. But those who persevere through this studied banality find themselves rewarded in *Terrahawks* by a series of outrageous wit and humour with none of the wooden pretentions of the earlier *Captain Scarlet,* also currently wobbling around the nether-regions of some ITV stations.

Of course it's impossible to take *Terrahawks* seriously – we're talking grotesque puppets here – but this is what most angered the above-mentioned Anderfans who so desperately wanted the series to be poker-faced. Instead *Terrahawks* – basically *UFO* with *Spitting Image*-style puppets and jokes – is a motley collection of typical Anderson four-square, square-jawed heroes, glitzy hardware, lots of explosions all mixed together in an irresistible science-fiction pastiche.

This last series of episodes has dispensed with all but the most cursory pretence of drama and the emphasis has swung well away from the doings of the generally dull human characters (with the notable exception of Stu Dapples, the roadie and session player to the series' perennial pop-star Kate Kestrel) and has moved to Mars, home of Zelda and her freaky family. Zelda's clan are the antithesis of the Terrahawks themselves; where the latter are hyper-efficient, with their Thunderbirds-style fleet of defensive machines, bases and equipment, Zelda and Co are so stupid it's hard to believe they ever managed to conquer Mars in the first place. Zelda's bumbling children are at the root of her repeated failure to take over Earth, from the daughter Cystar (complete with bright yellow wig and feather boa to accentuate her 'beauty') who shrieks "wonderful!" at every available opportunity, to the fanged Yungstar, whose wonderfully pathetic voice sounds as if it's been strained through acid soup. "Can you hear me mother?" he rattles in moments of extreme peril.

The latest addition to the android family is Birlgoy (think about it) who has only appeared in the last thirteen episodes. Birlgoy is the revolting snub-nosed child of Cystar, an androgynous creation which has the deviousness of Adolf Hitler (and matching accent) and, when the occasion demands, the absolute innocence (and voice) of absolute youth. "I'm going to have a baby!" screeched Cystar in the first and most tasteless of the episodes – but quite how androids give birth and how they get pregnant in the first place are questions thankfully left unanswered.

Terrahawks is too short to allow for any wildly over-complicated plots but the stories (all written by Anderson regular Tony Barwick under a series of ludicrous pseudonyms such as Polly Philestein, Frank Einsten and Anne Teakstein) are nothing if not ingenious, featuring all the staple ingredients of good and bad science-fiction: monsters, giant spaceships, super-powered aliens, timewarps, etc. It's all there in *Terrahawks*.

The special effects, distinctly dodgy in early episodes, have become quite breathtaking in the later episodes, with huge starships and space battles that would do a *Star Wars* film justice.

If you haven't seen *Terrahawks* because your memories of *Thunderbirds* and *Stingray* are too strong, you'd be well advised to give the series another chance next time it comes round. I can think of more unpleasant ways of spending half-an-hour.

Captain Katt

From science-fiction as comedy to comedy as science-fiction. Peter Grimwade's *Dramarama* production *The Come Uppance of Captain Katt* (see elsewhere in this issue) clearly had a point to make rather than a story to tell. It's been described in these very pages as a 'spoof on *Doctor Who*' but to these eyes it was more of a parody on contemporary television, taking *Doctor Who* as its role-model because of Grimwade's close association with the series. Naturally the subject-matter is *Doctor Who* in another name – the ailing science-fiction series with a star who's suddenly become too big for the series' boots – and all the TV production stereotypes were in attendance. We had the bumptious star, the diplomatic floor manager, the ice-cool producer, the hangdog co-stars, the hysterical director who "can't take any more of this!" and the slightly-fay dresser. Grimwade's script was painless and actually quite witty – although I can't remember any of the 'jokes' – and Alfred Marks turned in a fine if loud performance as the arrogant and over-inflated Ludo French, and later rather obviously disguised as a detective. But the play's ending was all so rushed and confusing that the whole thing was very much a case of "So what . . .?"

Films on TV

BBC 2's new version of Saturday night horror movies kicked off with a film which was, if nothing else, a perfect argument for keeping pubs open until at least midnight. *The Giant Spider Invasion,* a 1975 "chiller" wherein a car with a rug slung over it chases after a lot of very bad actors. A black hole opens up in a field (happens all the time around these parts) and a huge staggeringly unconvincing spider trundles out, eyes a'glowing, shrieking and munching up cows and people in no particular order of preference. Lots of demented smaller spiders pop out of rock-like eggs and set about terrorising the odd naked girl or two. *The Giant Spider Invasion* is one of those films where deadpan people say things like "God knows how many monsters may come through!" and "There's only one thing I know of that could cause a spacewarp like that!" "Of course ! A miniature black hole!" amongst other priceless gems. Sometimes the sick bucket's just too far away . . .

There's a bit of gratuitous blood, a lot of terrible acting and matching dialogue and special effects that almost rise to the level of laughable. It all comes together in a film that those pesky Medved brothers (who persuade people to waste their money on lavish books about other people wasting their money making lousy films no-one wanted to see) could write a trilogy about. Personally I'd rather crawl into the jaws of the nearest passing spider of any size than watch this rubbish again.

The usually sensible people at Channel Four can generally be relied upon to present some rather more out-of-the ordinary fare. Recently they unearthed and screened *The Uninvited,* a 'classic' black-and-white from the days before Spielberg and his poltergeists were even twinkles in eyes. This film (see *Starburst* 60) was something of a novelty when released back in 1944 but sadly time hasn't treated it kindly. Its mixture of humour (mostly courtesy of an incredibly youthful-looking Ray Milland) sits uneasily with its affectations towards horror. The etheral manifestations of the ghosts of Windward House are pretty spooky but the plot is a little too convoluted in an Agatha Christie way to make it truly terrifying. Whatever atmosphere it engendered was totally lost in the final flip line of dialogue.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, James Thurber's famous tale of a bored and boring man-in-the-street (Danny Kaye) who escapes into his own fantasy world has dated even more despite being shot in colour. Half way through I began to wish I was somewhere else: luckily for me at least this was a fantasy I was rapidly able to turn into reality.Goodnight. ■

PREVIEW

Presented by Alan Jones

FREDDY'S REVENGE Richard Englund as Freddy – would you smile with this face?

AS a postscript to last month's spotlight on the Cannon organisation, you'll have noticed that all the Thorn/EMI products they acquired in the deal have been getting released extremely quickly in an effort to maximise their assets for a quick turnover. *Black Moon Rising* was rush released, *Silver Bullet* suddenly appeared from nowhere and the same fate looks probable for Richard Franklin's *Link.* The good news, for those who care, is that *Buckaroo Banzai* will finally creep out at last – more likely as not on video only. I reviewed this film nearly two years ago now and I still stick by my comments about it being too wacky and spaced out for its own good. *Buckaroo Banzai* should have been fun but as it stands it is still an incoherent mess. But since my review appeared *Buckaroo Banzai* has gone on to become a cult film in America with mass midnight audience acceptance seriously rivalling that of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show.* Fan clubs have sprung up – one called 'Team Banzai' boasts thousands of members – and Saturday nights have become a ritual of fancy dress and audience participation at the Waverley Theatre in New York's Greenwich Village. A more unlikely cult phenomenon I can't imagine! Still, soon you will be able to find out for yourself what all the fuss is about. When, I'm not sure, but I thought it would be worth mentioning just in case Cannon slip it out without due warning to the press which at the present time seems to be their way of dealing with their inherited back catalogue. And just for the record, I thought *Silver Bullet* was awful but not quite as bad as had been expected as one or two atmospheric scenes saved it from being a complete write-off. And now on to the new releases which should satisfy all those who have been complaining about the lack of true blue horror movies so far this year.

A Nightmare on Elm Street Part II: Freddy's Revenge

What is one supposed to make of *Freddy's Revenge,* the anticipated sequel to the fantamagorical *A Nightmare on Elm Street,* which most considered one of the finest flights of fantasy in recent years? Well it becomes only too apparent that New Line aren't particularly interested in sequels, more a franchise to their surprise hit. Any substandard plot-line would do, simply market the commercial title, sit back and watch the money roll in from a public stupidly hoping for more off-the-wall thrills. Which sadly is precisely what's happened as *A Nightmare on Elm Street Part II: Freddy's Revenge* has made more money than the original.

Freddy's Revenge haltingly goes over old ground and although it's quite a thoughtful little film in a way, it lacks the excitement and visceral punch of the first superior outing.

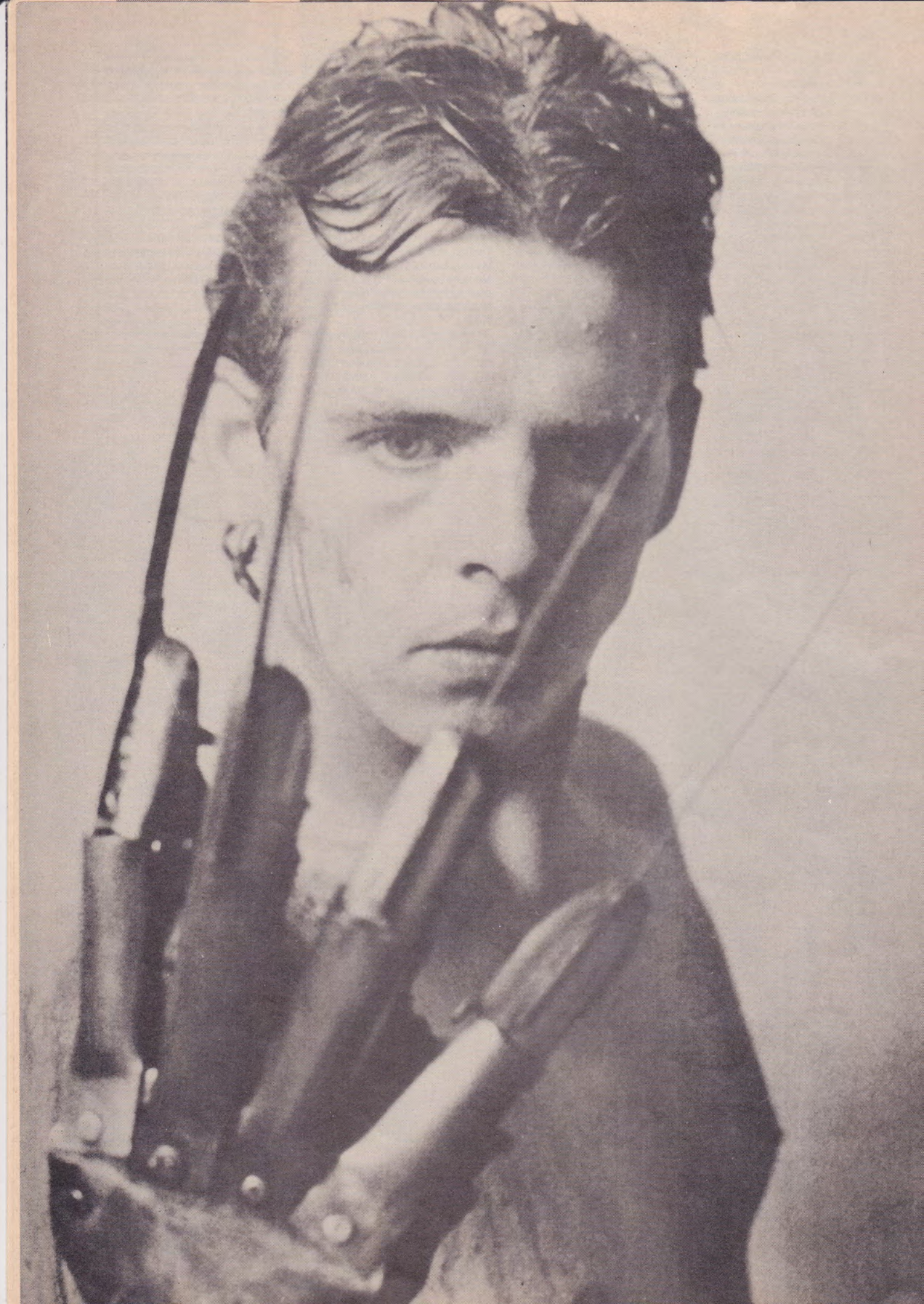
The film begins with another unannounced dream sequence where teenager Jesse Walsh (Mark Patton, who plays the whole film with one facial expression), finds himself balanced on a precipice in a school bus driven by Freddy. Before anyone has time to notice how naff the miniature work is, Jesse awakens. And it's back to '60s sitcom land where Jesse's parents are worried about what's happening to their son who is showing all the signs of some terminal illness. Unfortunately *Freddy's Revenge* isn't about psychotic dreams at all but the more conventional possession syndrome. You see Freddy needs a physical surrogate to help him execute his brand of stalk and slash. (In one of the few 'nice' touches the film has, Freddy rips back his scalp to expose pulsating grey matter and says "I need you. You have the body. I have the brains".) Freddy has chosen Jesse because his father got a good deal on a certain property in Elm Street where five years ago something happened that no one likes to talk about. Except his new friends at Spring Wood High School that is. One in particular – his girlfriend Lisa (Kim Myers distractingly looking like a young Meryl Streep) – takes it in her stride when he's arrested wandering around naked in town, confesses to twin murders, metamorphoses into Freddy and causes endless death and horror at her pool party. Eventually it's Lisa who figures out who Freddy is and how to banish him yet again into dreamscaped oblivion.

How *Alone in the Dark* director, Jack Sholder, could take an idea with such initial promise and make it so dull is beyond me. All the comfortable icons of the original film are here alright – scraping metallic finger nails, giant prosthetic tongues and more boiler room mayhem. But the film is so unshocking and sparsely populated by gore incidents that only the most patient will put up with it for long. That is unless you find a possessed budgerigar exploding the height of horror! To be fair, the climactic transformatin of Jesse into the raddled Freddy is just as fabulous as the spinning bedroom scene in the first film. But that's all there is. Melting furniture and eyes peering out from open mouths are a pretty poor substitute for the meaty terror Wes Craven provided the first time around.

However, the main reason why I found *Freddy's Revenge* a hard act to swallow is mainly due to the dubious misplaced homoerotic content of the first half. I'm not joking when I say that Sholder's camera seems to be constantly aimed at crotch/jock strap level, a theme which becomes more explicit with Freddy's murder of Jesse's football coach, a closet leather queen who hits the local S&M bar before being tied to a shower and then beaten and sliced from behind. Add the *double-entendre* contained in our hero's name and you could be forgiven for interpreting *Freddy's Revenge* as the first fantasy to emerge as a thinly disguised AIDS tract.

On whatever level you care to explain *Freddy's Revenge* the bottom line is that it's a pretty poor show from all concerned and in the context of the first film it just doesn't make any sense. The good news is that Wes Craven will be back on board for *Part III* if only in an advisory capacity. And I can only add my resounding cheers to yours for that. Otherwise Freddy has no fair chance at all in threatening the longevity of Jason in the *Friday the 13th* series.

Jesse and Freddy – Knife fight on Elm Street?



A Crawlspace

Crawlspace is without doubt the most technically accomplished and most beautifully photographed Empire Picture to date. But all the production value in the world can't mask the fact that the end result is a fascinating bore and not in the least bit scary. Actually most of us have seen this film before anyway. Back in 1979 it was called *Tourist Trap* which Charles Band also produced, David Schmoeller also wrote and directed, and Pino Donaggio's music once again lifted to heights of tension not allowed for on the printed page.

Going against the grain of the more recent Empire products by being a slow, mood piece rather than another slice of schlock, *Crawlspace* hesitates shakily between being a hommage to the classic horror film and broad Nietzschean theory. Unlike Chuck Connors in *Tourist Trap,* Klaus Kinski is perfectly cast as Dr Karl Gunther, the manic son of an ex-Nazi war criminal whose addiction to death causes him to kill the tenants in the apartment block he owns. (Followers of Empire films will recognise the interiors here as the same used in *Troll*). Gunther only rents to attractive women, spies on them through the air-ducts – the crawlspace – and eventually murders them via various diabolical booby traps. After each death he plays a game of Russian roulette because, in his twisted mind, if he is meant to be punished the gun would fire. It is left to his latest tenant Lori Bancroft (Talia Balsam), to find out the truth from Joseph Steiner (Kenneth Robert Shippy), whose late brother was one of Gunther's 'experiments' in Buenos Aires, and fight for her life in his attic where he has kept a tongueless woman caged up for years.

Crawlspace skirts bad taste almost apologetically and therein lies its problem. Strange for the Empire crowd to hold back on gore and mute their thrills so severely especially with the interesting range of torture instruments on show. It's as if the subject matter, with echoes of concentration camps and the theme of Gunther only feeling alive when he kills, was considered enough of a creepy charge to compensate for the unrelieved sombreness. It isn't, but it was a brave try nevertheless. *Crawlspace* is well worth seeing for Kinski's memorable performance. He maintains a quiet dignity whether blurring his sexuality with tarty make-up, getting stimulated by Hitler newsreels or perfecting his killing machines. One of the latter is a chair with a built-in seat spike, the description of which is about as unpleasant as *Crawlspace* gets.

Spookies

Spookies was the best entertainment award recently at the Paris Fantasy Film Festival. Knowing the noisy crowd who pack the Rex cinema night after night on the Boulevard Poissoniere looking for low-grade cheap thrills more than artistic quality – I'm not surprised! *Spookies* is jam-packed with everything the undiscriminating could wish for in a film. Busty girls shimmering with hints of unbridled passion, a laughable story with built-in derision and a bevy of crude but effective rubbery monsters to scream at. Originally titled *Twisted Souls, Spookies* started out with two directors at the helm, Brendan Faulkner and Thomas Doran, until a fight broke out with the British backers, and editor Eugenie Joseph finally pulled it all together. The film is nothing more than a clone of the hundreds of other *Evil Dead* inspired stalk and slash films already on video but its sole point of interest is the special effects which just manage to drag it screaming above the expected initial level. It is such a surprise to see halfway decent stop-motion and prosthetic work suddenly rear their ugly heads in the middle of the model tale of a group of lost party-goers wandering around a deserted mansion – which is the only reason I'm mentioning this sub-standard diversion at all.

The mansion, you see, is owned by Kreon (Felix Ward), a decrepit sorceror who needs chess-inspired human sacrifices to bring back to life his beautiful but reluctant bride (Maria Pechukas), who wisely committed suicide 70 years earlier. The nine party-goers find a ouija board and really only have themselves to blame for summoning up the undead which manifest themselves as Muck Men, a grim reaper skeleton with illuminated red eyes, green lizard monsters and, quite the best of all, an oriental lady who transforms brilliantly into a huge giant spider. *Spookies* ends with graves swallowing split heads and glowing brains as the reanimated bride is pursued by a nightmarish assortment of zombies. And although it's strictly amateur night on the levels of technical competence, acting ability, failed comedy intent and fright, if you are willing to forgive its cheapness and paucity of talent, *Spookies* is well worth seeing for the package of monsters alone.

CRAWLSPACE: Klaus Kinski lies in wait

Mark Patton (Jesse) shows off his claws

SPOOKIES: A menagerie of rubbery monsters

MAXIE: "I only asked for a pay rise!"

Maxie

A brief respite from all this turgid terror comes with the only film I can heartily recommend for everyone this month. Glenn Close starred in two movies which virtually opened simultaneously in America late last year. *Jagged Edge* went on to become a surprise sleeper hit and duplicated its success here. The other, *Maxie,* inexplicably disappeared without a trace. And that's a shame, because *Maxie* is by far the better of the two and Ms. Close is nothing short of brilliant in it.

Maxie is an amusing if slight, comic fantasy based on the story "Marion's Wall" by noted writer Jack Finney – he of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* fame – in which director Paul Aaron tries to recreate the feeling of 1930s screwball comedies and especially the *Topper* series. This aspect of the film is somewhat hit and miss, but Patricia (*9 to 5*) Resnick's screenplay is sharply observed and tinged with an emotion that many will find hard to resist. Put in simple terms, *Maxie* is an old-fashioned feel-good movie and none the worse for it either.

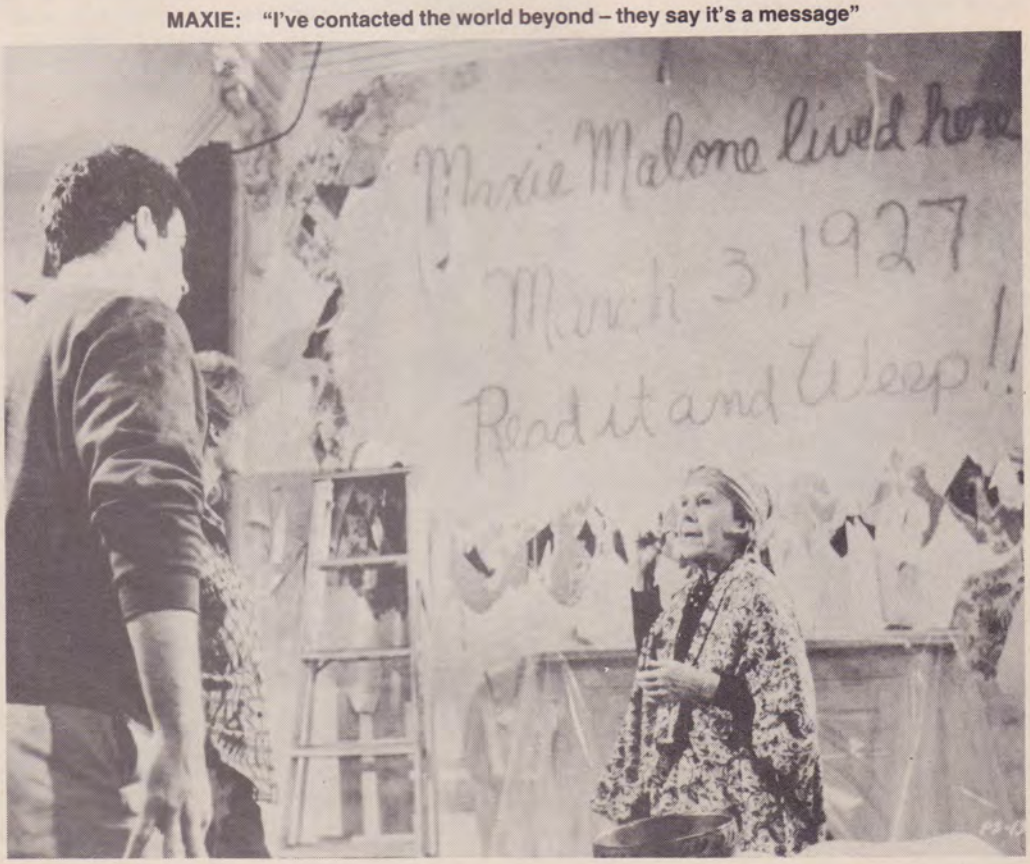
While renovating their San Francisco townhouse, Nick (Mandy Patinkin) and his wife Jan (Close) discover a 50 year-old message scrawled in crimson lipstick under the layers of wallpaper. It was written by Maxie Malone, an aspiring starlet, who died in a car crash just as her career was about to take off on the eve of a screen test for D.W. Griffith. The next day as Nick watches the only movie Maxie ever got to make called 'Flapper Melodies' on video-cassette, her ghost turns up to check it out as well. Suitably impressed with the bit part she never lived to see, Maxie promptly takes over Jan's body for one last bid at the stardom that eluded her when her life was tragically cut short. After the obvious initial annoyance on Jan's part, she goes along with the intermittent possession to help Maxie achieve her goal. But she finds herself out of her depth when a deodorant commercial leads Maxie on the path to Hollywood fame in a remake of *Cleopatra.*

If you forget the time-wasting sub-plots concerning exorcism and extra-marital affairs, *Maxie* emerges as heart-warming, sweet-spirited entertainment – nothing more, nothing less. The comedy springs mainly from Close's deft dual portrayal of the straight-laced, predictable Jan contrasted with the vivacious, irrepressible Maxie and Patinkin's delightfully bewildered reactions to the craziness of never being sure when his wife is indeed his wife. Close just alters her voice and body movements to convey both parts and her performance is a triumph. She sings, dances and acts with a bewitching ease forcing total suspension of disbelief in the whole preposterous premise. With Ruth Gordon lending able support in her last film role as Maxie's former vaudeville partner, *Maxie* is a charming adult-orientated confection that deserves your attention.

Frankenstein '88: The Vindicator

This month's Gore Corner is somewhat redundant considering the films I've already covered, but if I don't mention a little gem of a film from Canada soon, it will be gone and undeservedly forgotten. *Frankenstein '88: The Vindicator* comes from the same producers who brought David Cronenberg to world attention and is directed by Jean-Claude Lord whose above average entry into the slice and dice stakes, *Visiting Hours,* was far better than anyone gave it credit for. The recently added subtitle of *The Vindicator* should really be the tip-off as to where script writers Edith Rey and David Reston are coming from. But the only real steal from *The Terminator* is the unstoppable ability of the title creature. Otherwise this is a superbly realised and absorbing sci-fi fantasy that tries hard to inject suspense into its worn-out idea and, incredibly, succeeds.

MAXIE: "I've contacted the world beyond – they say it's a message"



At the Aerospace Research Corporation Laboratories, brilliant scientist Carl Lehman (David McIlwraith) is the victim of an arranged radiation accident conceived by the ruthless head man Alex Whyte (Richard Cox) to test out his indestructible cyborg theory which utilises a human brain and special computer link-up. Using Lehman's corpse, Whyte creates the first of a proposed army of reanimated humanoids, but the creature escapes before a remote control unit is attached, turning it into a deadly killing machine that will attack anything that approaches. Although programmed to kill on sight, Lehman's hazy memories of his past life turn the creature in a schizoid-being who teeters between rage and fear. His pregnant wife tries to help, while Whyte hires a female bounty hunter, played by sublime exploitation queen Pam Grier, to destroy it with her array of lethal needles.

The Vindicator is edgy stuff that expertly twists and turns to keep you guessing about the outcome but it's the touches of pathos that set it apart from the usual anonymous low-budget production-line fodder. Few will be able to hold back the tears when the creature's terrified wife faces a climactic threat far worse than anybody could possibly have imagined.

Although *The Vindicator* is highly inventive in all the right areas for a change, it is Stan Winston's monster make-up which is probably its most galvanising asset. Looking more like the Mummy than any Karloff imitation, McIlwraith's grotesque countenance incorporates perfect eyes due to goggle protection during the 'accident' and this provides some really lovely imagery. The Frankenstein myth is neatly inverted too. One scene replays the famous one in the original *Frankenstein* where Karloff meets a young girl at the lakeside. Only here it's a garbage dump and when a schoolboy happens upon the unfortunate creature he says, "Do you know E.T.?" which only goes to prove how far we've come in the reinterpretation of basic ideas. *The Vindicator* is a really pleasant surprise and one that you would be foolish to miss.

MAXIE: Glenn close in the title role

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET, PART II: FREDDY'S REVENGE
Directed by Jack Sholder.
Produced by Robert Shaye.
Screenplay by David Chaskin.
Special Effects by Dick Albain, Kevin Yagher, Mark Shostrom, Rick Lazzarini, Paul Boyington.
Starring Mark Patton, Kim Myers, Robert Rusler, Hope Lange, Clu Gulager, Robert Englund.
84 mins. Cert 18.
Released October.

CRAWLSPACE
Written and Directed by David Schmoeller.
Produced by Charles Band and Roberto Bessi.
Starring Klaus Kinski, Talia Balsam, Barbara Whinnery, Sally Brown, Tane, Jack Heller.
77 mins. Cert 18.
Release not fixed.

SPOOKIES
Directed by Eugenie Joseph, Thomas Doran and Brendan Faulkner.
Produced by Joseph, Foran, Faulkner and Frank M. Farel.
Written by Farel, Doran, Faulkner.
Special Effects by Arnold Gargiulo II, Vincent Guastini, Gabriel Bartalos, Jennifer Aspinal.
Starring Felix Ward, Dan Scott, Alec Nemser, Maria Pechukas.
84 mins. Cert 18.
Release not fixed.

MAXIE
Directed by Paul Aaron.
Produced by Carter De Haven.
Photographed by Fred Schuler.
Ghost Visual Effects by Bill Taylor.
Starring Glenn Close, Mandy Patinkin, Ruth Gordon, Valerie Curtin, Michael Ensign, Googy Gress, Barnard Hughes.
98 mins. Cert PG.
Released August.

FRANKENSTEIN '88: THE VINDICATOR
Directed by Jean-Claude Lord.
Produced by Andre Link and Pierre David.
Music by Paul Zaza.
Starring Terri Austin, Richard Cox, Maury Chaykin, Pam Grier, David McIlwraith.
88 mins. Cert 18.
Release not fixed.

THE REVELATIONS OF A SCRIPT EDITOR

It is not uncommon for people working on films and television programmes to fall out over what each feels is best. This recently happened on *Doctor Who* but what makes it the more interesting is that this show is on trial for its survival.

Script Editor, Eric Saward, who left the programme before the latest season was completed, gave us this frank and candid interview. In order not to spoil any of the surprises in store in the show we have edited out some of the details of the plot.

Let's start with the most imeediate thing – you've recently left *Doctor Who*.

Well . . . I was getting very fed up with the way *Doctor Who* was being run, largely by John Nathan-Turner – his attitude and his lack of insight into what *makes* a television series like *Doctor Who* work. This had been going on for a couple of years and after being cancelled and coming back almost in the same manner as we were before . . . the same sort of pantomime-ish aspects that I so *despised* about the show. I just think it isn't worth it.

So, what exactly was the effect of the cancellation?

We were rather stunned. We didn't know what was going on. I don't think anyone's really got to the bottom of why it was cancelled. I don't honestly think that, Michael Grade can correct me, we were simply taken off because they thought we were awful. If we were really that bad I can't believe he would have kept the same team. Grade did criticise us, and when he talks about the production team he's basically speaking about the Producer and the Script Editor who are the team that are always there. I don't whether he was just referring to us.

What was the first thing you knew about the cancellation?

John had been told on the Monday that we were being cancelled, and he told me and Anji Smith, the Production Associate on the following day. He wanted us to know before it was made public, but as it transpired the whole department knew anyway.

There were no reasons given?

Other than it was thought the show needed resting, re-thinking. We were told we were going back to 25 minutes, which was Michael Grade's decision, and that more comedy was wanted. I must admit I didn't understand Grade's note about comedy, last season we had three very comic stories ("Vengeance on Varos", "Two Doctors", "Revelation of the Daleks"). It was a pity that two out of the three of those stories were poorly directed.

There's a certain something, a sparkle, missing from the direction.

Most of the directors on *Who* haven't got the lightness of touch necessary. And if they've got it they don't hang around *Who* for very long because of the budget restrictions, working atmosphere, quality of the scripts and so on. The show isn't that enticing to a rising director.

What do you mean by the working atmosphere?

Well, this constant thing of having to do everything for tuppence. Interference does go on. John can become unpleasant to someone he's employed, such as his director. The likes of Graeme Harper will not come back to *Doctor Who* if they've got something else to do. People like Peter Grimwade, who I suppose is the only other director of any note who has come out of *Who* since John has been Producer, says he wouldn't work with John Nathan-Turner any more – and I don't think Nathan-Turner would employ him.

There was some row, wasn't there?

It was a lunatic situation . . . Grimwade directed a script I had written called "Earthshock". He made the story work very well, so John decided he could direct "Resurrection of the Daleks" (in my opinion the worst *Doctor Who* story ever written. (As the author I am entitled to say that!) Peter had been booked and there was a strike. So the story was cancelled. Grimwade said "Fine, well obviously we can't do anything about that. If I've not got anything to do I'm going to have lunch and go home". So he took me, remember I was the author as well as the Script Editor on the show, and his Production Manager and one or two other members of the team. I think there were about six of us. We went to the Television Centre for lunch – I mean so exciting, it's unbelievable – only to find when we get back that John Nathan-Turner had been shouting and screaming all over the building "How dare they all go off to lunch together, and not invite me".

Oh, no!

It's true! Yes he was *furious* and it was so silly. "How dare they? I am the one who does the hiring and firing around here – how dare he take . . ." He took exception to my going because he said "How dare he take my Script Editor to lunch, and not me". He took that *absolutely* as an out and out insult, and that was a contributing factor to why Peter was never invited back.

No!

Pathetic isn't it? It's mind-numbing. One of the two half-decent directors he's had on the show he will not use because of a silly, stupid incident like that. I think he's a very paranoid individual He probably feels that I've been slagging him off all over the place since I left . . . which is not true. There were lots of silly events before I did leave. When I left, I was writing the last episode. We had talked about this ending of the season and he had agreed, in principle, to what was wanted – a hard clift-hanging thing. I was surprised he had agreed, knowing he does go for these pappy pantomime sort of endings. I went ahead and wrote the last episode as I had discussed it with Bob

(Holmes) and as I had with John, but the episode went in, and John said "Yes, that's all fine, fine. What about the end? I don't like the end, we can't go out on that end". He reneged on but he had agreed. He wanted the "walk-down", happy pantomime ending. I couldn't believe it. But that's the man . He knows so much, he has the show cancelled and is openly criticised by the Controller of BBC 1 television.

How did the idea of "the trial" come about?

It was as much an 'off the top of my head' suggestion to get things moving. This was July. We'd done *nothing* for four months, apart from John going to Conventions in America, which was the other thing that pissed me off. Anyway, he accepted without any discussion that the trial aspect of the Doctor reflected what was going on anyway and went upstars and told Jonathan Powell, who said "fine, go ahead". It was going to be an examination of the Doctor, what had *led* the Doctor to where he was and how he had become involved in his various adventures and so on.

In other words a sort of parallel to what was going on outside the programme?

Yes, I also hoped it would give us a chance to develop the Doctor a little more as a character, on trial for his life. I don't think that has worked out. Pity. However, I'm pleased we dropped the 'separate' story idea in favour of a proper serial and so maintain continuity of the trial, plus the bonus of being able to cliff-hang out of an episode of a particular story rather than wrap it up. This was fine, great, because it all began to work and as I say this thing came up "Let's end the whole thing on an absolute wham. The show may not come back but at least it won't go out and be *forgotten*." And that's why I thought we were going ahead but as it turned out John had other ideas which brings us back to why I didn't allow my version of the final episode to go into production. I hadn't signed my contract to write the episode. And I thought, well, I have one of two choices; I leave it in and let *him* play with the end, which I felt quite strongly about, or I withdraw it. That was what I then decided to do, which cost me my fee, so it was no small token.

You say that you didn't like the pantomime aspect. Was that in it all the way since you've been doing the script-editing?

It's grown stronger. It comes out in all sorts of ways. These are criticisms that are levelled against John quite commonly, and not only by the fans. I endorse some of them. The fact is John is not, at heart, a drama producer. He's a light entertainment man. He likes using "LE" people. God knows why he's in drama.

A lot of fans criticise John for his America fixation. How much do you think that going off to Conventions affected the time he had available?

When he goes to these Conventions he has to get permission from the head of department to do so. I gather that usually goes through on the nod. At first, it didnt encroach upon his work in that way. He started going to more and more of them. A lot of them would be at weekends. What did become apparent though, if he'd gone off for a weekend Convention to America, he would come into work on Monday straight from the 'plane. It was as though he wanted to go to the Conventions, but wanted to show everyone that nothing was distracting him from his duties as producer, so he would do the lunatic thing of coming back Sunday/Monday morning, coming into the office, and just shutting the door and going to sleep. He is *obsessed* with the American fans. I gather that he sanctions who can go to America and who can't. It's very difficult obviously to control actors who are no longer working on the show, and obviously the fan Conventions want the leading actors and the companions. But you'll find that writers were never invited. I mean someone like Robert Holmes who's written God knows how many stories, has been involved in it since Patrick Troughton's days, edited the show for three years, a man very experienced in writing for television who would have had a great deal to offer any audience who would bear to listen. Men like him were never invited. Only two directors ever went that I was aware of.

When John originally started he said he was only going to do it for a short time anyway. He would only do it for three years or so.

I think the main draw for him apart from the fact that he has got his fingers in so many pies is the income from the Conventions in America, which I think is *quite* a lot of money. I think that is something he is reluctant to give up.

It has also been said that he doesn't like any of the fans working for the BBC

Well, he's obsessed about keeping everything secret. But the one thing that again aggravates when someone takes a 2½ to 3 hour lunch-break every day is that you know that you're not going to be able to speak to him between that time. There's no two ways about it. He will come back if something has come up, but it's a ritual. He trots out at 12.30 and comes back after closing time . . .

I believe there have been times when you've urgently wanted to speak to him and he's been on the 'phone?

Oh, yes . . . that got rather silly and unpleasant. He went through a phase a couple of years ago of spending a lot of time locked in his office on the 'phone I think to America, certainly to the various Convention organisers – most of them are in America – and we had the lunatic situation one day. I was standing outside the office, I needed to see him and two of his directors needed to see him, and he'd been there chatting on the 'phone, as far as the Secretary was concerned, for at least an hour. It wasn't just once, it was often, and with people waiting to see him – waiting to make the goddamm show he was supposed to be the producer of. It was anything that would come up – I mean he'd rather read a

Colin Baker, Bonnie Langford and Producer John Nathan-Turner in pantomime mode

manuscript from W.H. Allen, or spend hours 'piddling' about with some crappy piece of merchandising from Enterprises than willingly become involved in talking about what we were doing. I can't understand it.

You mentioned that in the preparation for the present season, you didn't actually start to do anything in particular until July. Were there no discussions about what to do about the programme – what was going on during that time?

Well, writers came in in July to be briefed, and really there'd been not a great deal of discussion before then – as I say apart from this possibility of a trial. There was almost a reluctance to talk about it, which again I found very disturbing. I was hoping that he would become a bit more approachable, a bit more creative, given the shock. I mean, it really upset him – upset all of us – but it *stunned* him. I'm just wondering whether it really did shake him so badly – John has this very BBC attitude that "if in doubt, keep your head down and say nothing".

You have had a lot to do with the Colin Baker Doctor. How much did you put into the part?

Well, with any show that casts its leading actor and then fits in around that actor it's difficult. You look to the actor to see what he can do, and how he's going to play the part – if you're permitted by the producer, you try and talk to him. Again that was a typical example – I couldn't openly talk to Colin Baker – I would have to ring him up, discreetly at home, to see what he felt and what he was doing, because John would see it as collusion – that you were conspiring against him, rather than the reality, which was you were trying to do your bloody job. Contrary to what he thinks, you do actually have to speak to an actor and a director occasionally, otherwise nothing gets done. So we were 'piddling' about like that, chatting to each other discreetly and quietly, trying to shape something that would vaguely work. The problem with a show like *Doctor Who* is that if the casting is not strong enough there is not a greal deal you can do to adjust it – you can only adjust the material to the actor playing it. I mean Peter Davison and Colin Baker are different in as much as Peter Davison is different from Tom Baker. But Tom Baker brought an amazing degree of eccentricity to the part – certainly his performance is apparent on the screen.

It was said that JNT actually in the last season managed to calm him down a bit. He now seems to be doing the sort of things that he was stopping Tom from doing when he first took over.

Well I didn't work on the first season. Chris Bidmead was the editor then. The last year of Graham Williams was probably the worst for Tom and John Nathan-Turner did attempt to quieten Tom down – at the expense of the performance I would leave others to decide. The thing about having a strong leading man is that you have got to let him have his head to a degree. I mean you don't want to let him totally run the roost because then it becomes so self-indulgent and lunatic you can kill the very thing you are trying to keep alive. But when you have got a strong leading actor, because it's his energy, his interpretation, his commitment to the part that decides whether it works or not, in a way you should be backing and supporting that energy and not trying to undercut it. That certainly is not the way *Who* is at the moment. The biggest Prima Donna on the show is the producer. I have heard people say after a Producer's Run "Christ! We are supposed to be the temperamental buggers here and we are the ones having to hold back in case we upset the producer", which again to me is totally pointless. I mean if you make motor cars and you're more concerned in making sure you don't upset your foreman than in putting your car together you are losing the whole point of your function.

In many ways for *Doctor Who* to succeed you need not only the right script and the right director but also everything going for it and there are so many things that can go wrong.

Yes you do, without a decent script you have got nothing. But when you meet someone like John who is terrified of writers anyway . . .

"The Biggest Prima Donna on the Show is the Producer"

He is?

Yes. It is not without reason that we don't, didn't have many very good writers on *Doctor Who*. It was a battle to get Bob Holmes to do a story.

Well what was the battle to get Robert Holmes back? I thought that perhaps he didn't want to be involved with the programme?

When I had been there about a year, I had been watching a lot of the back material and the thing that I became aware of was how good Robert Holmes' stuff was. I thought 'Well, why not have him in?' Now just before that happened John had got the go ahead to do the 90 minute 20th anniversary thing, and I suggested that we approach Robert Holmes. Robert had worked with Troughton, Pertwee, Tom Baker, not that Tom Baker was in that one, but he had worked with them, knew them and written for them. Bob to me seemed an absolutely splendid choice. John was very reluctant. John is frightened, I have always thought, of experienced people. He can't manipulate them as easily and as readily, as you can someone who needs the work, who will shut their mouth and get on with it. That makes a very boring working partner. Someone like Bob Holmes, comes through the door and tells you what *he* thinks, which is smashing. "This is what *I* want" he says, and then you discuss that, and you tell him what you want. You throw it into the melting pot. A lot of writers will come in, especially the new ones and they bring nothing with them because they are nervous. Anyway Bob came in to talk about this 20th anniversary show and I was embarrassed . . . I mean John wanted everything in it. He wanted all the Doctors, he wanted every monster we could get our hands on. I mean the brief was lunatic, absolutely lunatic, and of course Bob Holmes just fell on the floor laughing because it was so bloody stupid. It is very difficult to argue when you agree with somebody that what you are asking them to do is a bit silly, but anyway, we progressed and Bob went away and wrote a few scenes and he just couldn't keep a straight face. We went on for about two or three weeks and decided "this is bloody stupid". Anyway he gave up and we approached Terrance Dicks and said "Can you do this story?" He came down and chatted about a possible story, we expanded it there and then one afternoon, and he went away. The one thing about Terrance is he can produce vast amounts of material very, very quickly and the script arrived two or three weeks later. That was how Terrance Dicks came to write that particular show. But then it was a matter of saying well, Bob was perhaps not suitable for that briefing, so what about using him to write another script? "Oh I told you he would be difficult, I told you that he would want to do it his way. *I* am the producer now". Anyway, reluctantly, he conceded so Bob comes back, we have a talk about a possible story, he goes away and he writes it, and delivers the re-writes. It's then given to Graeme Harper and it comes out as a story called "The Caves of Androzani", which by the fans is considered the best story ever.

Did he care much for the scripts?

There was one occasion, when the script had gone to lots of additional new pages before they actually started rehearsing. When the script is finalised it is printed as a rehearsal script, and the director has a copy. Sometimes things are changed which may necessitate new pages being issued. But for one a vast amount of work had been done culminating in a lot of new pages which were being sent around to everybody, including the producer. For some extraordinary reason John had decided that you don't put new pages into a script. He was sitting next to me and instead of saying "Christ, I haven't got any of these new pages" or "I can't be bothered to insert them – can I look over your shoulder and share yours?", he sat there and he turned the pages – whilst everybody else there was reading. And there were *so many* new pages that it couldn't have made any sense at all to him. And you think, "Well there is something quite peculiar about you mate, that you can do that when all you need to say is 'Look, Eric, can I look at your script. I haven't got the new pages' or 'I can't be bothered . . .' " But no, he was the producer. He had to be seen to be totally in control and command and so on, even though he was making an absolute fool of himself by turning these pages of a script that bore no relationship to what was being read. The number of times that I've heard directors say "Christ I wish he would read the script. I wish he would read the script". What

happens is that you go in and talk to him about it and it becomes apparent that he is not following what you are saying. If you are lucky he skim reads it once. And that often is all he ever gives to it. So he's not asking complicated questions. You are not going to get an awful lot of sense out of him. And this was common.

Are you the first person to walk off the show?

Yes. One or two directors have come to it . . . but have not done so. In a way my leaving as I did was a form of self-preservation. I don't know how BBC Television will view me, or how Jonathan Powell will view me. I have no idea at all.

Some of the directors would have a habit of re-writing the script wouldn't they?: One director, Douglas Camfield, was well known for re-writing scripts.

Yes, well, we never had him.

I believe he was considered for the five Doctors?

Yes, that's again the usual balls-up. I think John met Waris Hussein, who directed the first episode of *Doctor Who*, at a party. And I think that Waris Hussein said, probably drunkenly, "Oh I would love to do the 20th Anniversary one" and John remembered this the following morning and wrote to him. I can't remember when it was, quite early on. It was something like July or August for a director to join in the beginning of January. So it was a long time ahead. He dropped a note to Waris Hussein saying, "Apropos your drunken conversation last night, I would love you to consider it seriously". And Waris Hussein didn't even reply. Which I thought was fine, but as I say this was about August. Now John Nathan-Turner was still sitting around in November waiting to hear from Waris Hussein! He then tries one or two other people, who say "No" because they are busy, and one of them happens to be Douglas Camfield. Camfield was asked at the end of November. Now Camfield was a director who stepped from one job into the next. He was highly thought of. Only John could approach him at the end of November to start working in January, and then be offended because Camfield said no, because he had got another job. Camfield was on the slate for directing *Missing from Home* in October. We all knew he was covering it except John Nathan-Turner. And he asks him and he says no. But can you honestly believe that Waris Hussein . . . one, would he come back? No! two, that John Nathan-Turner could wait three months before he does anything else – and, because he asked other people to do it, that is why Peter Moffat finished up directing it – because he was free. And it's by default, there is no planning, there is nothing. Matching directors to scripts was luck. I mean even if you didn't have a script, you know what sort of thing you are going for. But you would end up with the Bob Holmes story – "The Two Doctors" – a witty, interesting, amusing script comes out as just so much . . . merely wallpaper. And that is sad.

John Nathan-Turner supervises a photo session

Well, what did you think of the choice of Bonny Langford?

Well my first question was like everyone else's – "can she act?" And my impression is that she will not be very good. But again you see it follows through with this patnomime thing again – when I left and Jonathan Powell sent for me we had an extraordinary conversation. He asked what did I think of Colin Baker? And I said "I don't think he is very good – I don't think he has the energy and eccentricity that the part calls for", and "Uh" – that's all he ever said "Uh" – "What do you think of Bonny Langford?" I said "Well, I don't think she is very good either." I said "I don't think she can act, let alone bring anything to the show". I said that it was a great disappointment because my intention was to sharpen the female companion, create her in the script and then cast her which is a much more sensible way to do it than the other way round. I said also, given the fact that we are in 1986, the number of dozy female companions we have had doesn't actually reflect modern womanhood very accurately. He said "Well, why don't you do all that?" and I said "Well I am not working on the show anymore". He said "Oh yes, yes, I don't approve of that". And I said "Well I am sorry. I have gone. I can't work down there any more". And he said "Well why don't you sack her". I said "Sack who?" He said "Why don't you get rid of Bonny Langford?" I said "I am the script editor, not the producer". He said "Yes but why . . . were you not consulted about the casting?" I said "No, I was *told*". "Oh". So I think perhaps that gave me an insight into the fact that most sensible producers work closely with their script editors and talk about these things. No, I was *told* that Bonny Langord was going to be the new companion. I was *told* that Colin Baker was going to be the new Doctor. There was no debate at all.

I suppose the show is old fashioned. If you start from the bottom up you could pull it back on the rails. I mean it – it just needs – it has got stuck in its own time-warp – it needs something that reflects today I think.

DOCTOR WHO: The Doctor and Peri face the ultimate threat?

THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD

***Starburst* reporter Timothy Robins speaks to *Doctor Who*'s producer, John Nathan-Turner, and previews the new season.**

"FUTURE BBC schedules are, as you know, a secret but we hope that *Doctor Who* will be returning to Saturdays."

While the exact transmission times and dates remain officially unconfirmed, it's no secret that *Doctor Who* will be back this autumn after an absence of some eighteen months from Britain's TV screens. "It was a chance for a proper break, to clear the decks and re-charge our batteries," John said, when he rang to tell me about the highlights of the new season. From what he told me it looks as if *Doctor Who*'s batteries are now fully charged. There's no doubt that those who were ready to consign the series to that great space dustbin in the sky are going to be in for quite a surprise.

The new season takes *Doctor Who* out of its usual orbit of five or six loosely connected stories to chart a course through a single adventure entitled 'The Trial of a Time Lord'. The adventure spans fourteen 25-minute episodes which are divided into three main story segments. As John explained, "The Doctor is put on trial for breaking the Laws of Time. The stories are the evidence at his trial. The first and second stories are the evidence for the prosecution and the third story presents the Doctor's defence. The first is from his past, the second is from his near present, and the third is from his future."

The season opens with a four-episode story written by the late Robert Holmes (*Starburst* 96) and directed by Nicholas Mallett. It sees the Doctor, again played by larger than life Colin Baker, and Peri, the shapely Nicola Bryant, land on a mysterious planet where they become caught in a struggle between rogues, rebels and robots.

In the second story, another four-parter, the Doctor and Peri have a mind-warping experience on the planet of Sil, that slithery slug thing who left a trail of havoc in last season's 'Vengeance on Varos'. John noted, "Sil was a tremendously popular character who needed another outing. He was particularly popular with younger viewers who liked to imitate him." Nabil Shabin reprises his role as Sil while Philip Martin returns to chronical his creation's exploits. Ron Jones directs this story which says hello to Sil's boss, Kiv, and goodbye to Peri.

The task of writing the concluding six-part story has been divided between three people. Pip and Jane Baker, fresh from last season's 'Mark of the Rani', have scripted parts nine to twelve and part fourteen, whilst Robert Holmes scripted part thirteen. Alongside the Doctor, boisterous, multi-talented Bonnie Langford appears as his regular companion, Melanie.

"Melanie or Mel, for short, is a computer programmer from Pease Cottage in Sussex. She's a fitness fanatic, into muesli and raw carrots. She attempts to improve the Doctor's health and physique." While Mel may well want the Doctor on a diet of greens, in this story, greens want the Doctor in their diet as the pair encounter the Vervoids.

In the final two parts the Doctor discovers who is the ultimate foe as the Time Lords reach their verdict. What that verdict will be is by no means certain. The Doctor is faced with a formidable adversary in the form of Valeyard, the prosecuting council played throughout the season by the highly acclaimed Michael Jayston. Presiding over the trial is the inquisitor played by 'Oxo' mum, Lynda Bellingham. Chris Clough directs all six parts.

Asked to describe the style of the season, John said, "There is, of course, a lot of pressure not just on the programme but in the industry as a whole, to watch the levels of violence. We have tried to inject more humour, more wit, as opposed to slapstick." Doubtless with this in mind he has continued his policy of casting well-known comedy performers in dramatic roles.

The first story features Joan Sims of numerous 'Carry On . . .' films and Tony Selby, still well remembered as Corporal Marsh in the ITV National Service comedy, *Get Some In*. The second story sees the blustering Brian Blessed (*Black Adder* and *Return to Treasure Island*) and Chris Ryan (*The Young Ones*) joining in the screaming and shouting. The third story showcases two performers from the realm of TV fantasy, *Avengers* lady, Honor Blackman, and *Robin of Sherwood*'s Michael Craig.

That's your lot. To reveal more would certainly spoil what promises to be one of the most brilliantly imaginative seasons in the programme's history. John concluded by saying that he was particularly pleased with the running theme of the trial and found producing the season a very enjoyable experience. For the rest of us there is only one way to find out if the new season is an enjoyable experience. Watch it!

And watch this space for exclusive behind the scenes coverage of that season. ■

ENEMY MINE

DENNIS QUAID

By Tony Crawley

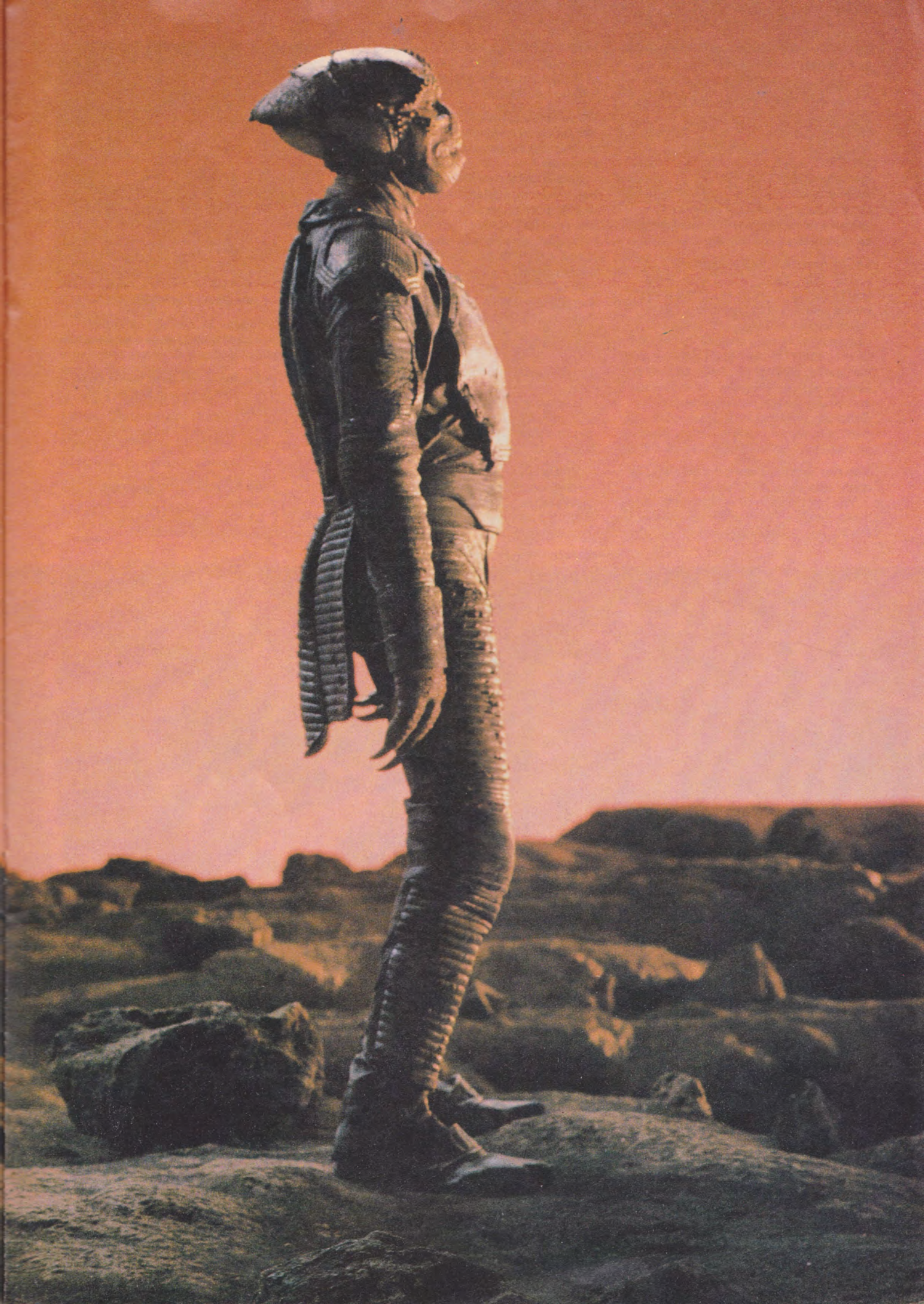
Photography by Karl Heinz Volgelmann

A CHESS game is interrupted. Lou Gossett, make-up as a giant, scaley E.T., leaves for his trailer next door with his son, a smile, a shimmy and a shake, and his opponent fires a Marlboro and looks content with the game – or the world.

He is among the eight Hollywood actors known, inevitably, as having *The Right Stuff.* Enough, for instance, to go chasing sharks in *Jaws 3-D* – not his favourite movie, although it changed his head. After it, he quit Hollywood for New York. 'To get back, you know, to why am I an actor? Not for the money. Not because this or that is going to be a success . . . but because I love to act.' Naturally, he's never been busier since he left. *Dreamscape. Enemy Mine,* here in West Germany. And he's lately wrapped up Dan Petrie Jr's latest cop, a Cajun after the Beverley Hills kind, in *Nothing But The Best.*

His name: Dennis Quaid, 32-year-old younger brother of the bigger, bulkier Randy. They nearly worked together in *Midnight Express* (1977), 'it was pretty nip 'n' tick between me and Brad Davis for the lead'. The brothers have since acted together in Walter Hill's *The Long Riders* (1980) and on stage – in New York, of course – in a play by the top Right Stuffer in Phil Kaufman's film, Sam Shepard.

Lounging behind a table in his trailer, Dennis looks as if he could still be working on the NASA film. His hair is astronaut short, although his space-suit is a mite grubbier than normal at the Cap and he hasn't shaved for a day or two (which modern movie hero has?).



But he's back in space and looking, well, as I tell him . . .

. . . very pleased with this film?

Sounds a cliche, I know, but this is the first science fiction film I know of that's based on character rather than hardware. I read the story on a 'plane from New York to LA and, at a critical point, I had to throw the script down. I was in tears . . . it touched me that much. It's such a *wonderful* story. Here's two guys who are enemies. One happens to be an alien. They could easily be an American and a Russian.

Or, an American and a Japanese . . .!

(He nods). Yeah, yeah, I know what you're saying . . . John Boorman made a movie called *Hell in the Pacific* (1969) which was something like this story. (Boorman obviously concurs; he refused an offer to direct *Enemy Mine*). But I've seen that picture and it's only half a picture. It blows them up right when the American and his Japanese counterpart start to discover something about each other. We don't stop there . . . we take it on. To areas you wouldn't believe. Real science fiction!

You say 'one happens to be an alien.' In truth, either one is the alien.

You just hit something right on the head there. The way I look at it, *I am* the alien! I'm the one devoid of human values. Drac has them. Not me. Not Davidge, the spaceman. For me, the film is the discovering of the human side of myself. You know – How to be Human!

Given the long lay-off, between directors, you had a rare opportunity to really work on Davidge for yourself – complete his portrait.

Sure. I had three months to think about him before we started shooting in Iceland with Richard Loncraine. So, I was basically prepared for Davidge back then. Of course, he's richer now because you can't help bringing more to it during that time. Also the new director is changing the slant of the picture – for the better. He's worked on the script in that time with Ed Khmara. Having the extra preparation time didn't particularly help or hinder me, but it's the sort of luxury you don't usually have in movies.

You've made some 14 other films since 1975 . . .

I started with a bit part in *Crazy Mama* (1975). Just the one line: God, don't shoot me! And then I didn't work again for nine months!

. . . but you've only belatedly entered the fantasy mould. Like Joe Ruben's *Dreamscape*.

That's the third film I've made for Joe. Interesting concept. A guy going into people's dreams, becoming part of their dreams – a participant. I think it worked. On some levels.

A native of Fynne IV

At this point, the trailer door bursts open and Lou the alien rushes in fast as if his tail was alight.

Lou: Quaid?

Dennis: Yeah. Look, *I'm* doing *my* interview now!

Me: Here . . .

Lou: I'll take a couple. One Stuyvesant, one Marlboro.

Me: Mix 'em together, what do you get?

Lou: Anglo-American armistice.

The message from *Enemy Mine* – love your enemy?

And this is your second film with that alien guy. How was *Jaws 3D?*

Actually, it was quite bad. It *is* a bad film. Only good thing about it was meeting my gal, Marie, we've been together two years now. And Lou, of course. Lou calls it: *Sharks Don't Like Soul Food!* Other than that, it was a learning experience for me. At the time, I felt I should be in a film which had a good chance of commercial success. A wrong reason to make any film.

Your decision or your agent's?

I felt I was kinda being . . . not pushed or pressured but encouraged to do it. Basically, the decision was mine. Just something you learn from. After I did that film, I sold everything, including my ranch in Montana, and moved to New York.

But you'd made another film which had good commercial chances. Why didn't the terrific *Right Stuff* take off?

Couple of reasons. One was the length. It's hard to get people into see a three-hour picture. The next was the advertising. John Glenn for President is the way they went with the ads. To capitalise on his presidential campaign. But your movie-going audience is aged 14-25. They didn't care who John Glenn was, really. So that hurt. The picture was not *The John Glenn Story*. It's about all seven Mercury astronauts and Chuck Yeagar.

You don't, it seems, like John Glenn.

He made me mad. He wouldn't have anything to do with the movie while we were making it. Nothing to do with the advertising. He wouldn't come to the premiere. And then, right when his campaign is going down the toilet, you see this ad on TV: John Glenn has the Right Stuff to be President. Oooooh-kay!

What was his reaction to you in the film?

He liked me quite a bit. In fact, he came to see Randy and I in the *True West* play and sent a bottle of Scotch back stage with a note: Congratulations from The World's Greatest Pilot.

To the Newest . . .

Yeah, I got my pilot's licence during the making of *Right Stuff*. The lessons helped me get the pilot's attitude.

Drac and Davidge battle for survival on a hostile world

The film worked for you, though.

Oh, it turned my life around. I'd wanted that Gordon Cooper role for a year before they even thought of making the movie because I'd read the book and I mean, this guy, Gordon Cooper, *fell asleep* on the launch-pad while waiting to be blasted off to the stars. I *had* to play him.

Meeting him was part of your preparation. But does that work? I was talking to Lou about playing real people and getting to know them. They know you're sizing them up, looking for quirks – so they're hiding them, aren't they?

I was lucky with Gordon. He was pretty much open with me. Instead of finding out what it was like being in the space programme, I was asking questions like: What were your parents like? What did you do as a kid? I had my own built-in biography from him – marriage, things like that. He got very intimate with me. I told him: I'm gonna be playing you, I might as well get it right; I'm on your side.

Does the fantasy arena really intrigue you or are you aboard by accident?

My career is in a different place now. I'm able to pick and choose a lot better. And I try to govern myself *not* to say: 'Well, I'm not gonna do that because it's a fantasy picture'. I'm always looking for something different. You talk of fantasy films . . . but when *Enemy Mine* came along, it was exactly what I was looking for. A film with great character. And such a great script, I couldn't turn it down.

How do you feel about it now?

It's the biggest, most satisfying role I've ever had. Davidge is a human being who gets to know a lot of sides to himself. Wolfgang thought he was a bit too Han Solo, at first. Now, Davidge really evolves through everything in the story: humour, anguish, tears, hate, pride, love, pain, action. There's no end of action! I'm trying to do most of it, myself. So, it's also, physically, a very gruelling experience.

Lose any good films while waiting for this one to get rolling anew?

Yup, one or two. But they're not worth talking about because I have no regrets. This one makes up for anything else. This one has really taken a turn for the better because Wolfgang is, maybe, the best director I've worked with.

In what way?

Well, no matter what they tell you here about 'Oh, we're not into special-effects, we're playing on the characters, man!' – which they always tell you guys on good films or bad, right? – we have both in this film. But Wolfgang really sets up these effects, the smoke, the explosions, everything is really well prepared in advance. So when we get to the set we're not concerned with them and have time to work on what's happening between these two characters. That's what is going to make the movie work – the characters. And Wolfgang does it all with a minimum of words. Every morning, first thing, we go into his trailer and *prepare*. We go through the day's script emotionally – what's happening with these people today. Where are we right now, where were we in the scene before, where are we gonna be in the scene after? Preparation is Wolfgang's big secret. It's a huge job, this movie; difficult to keep up with – and he's in perfect control.

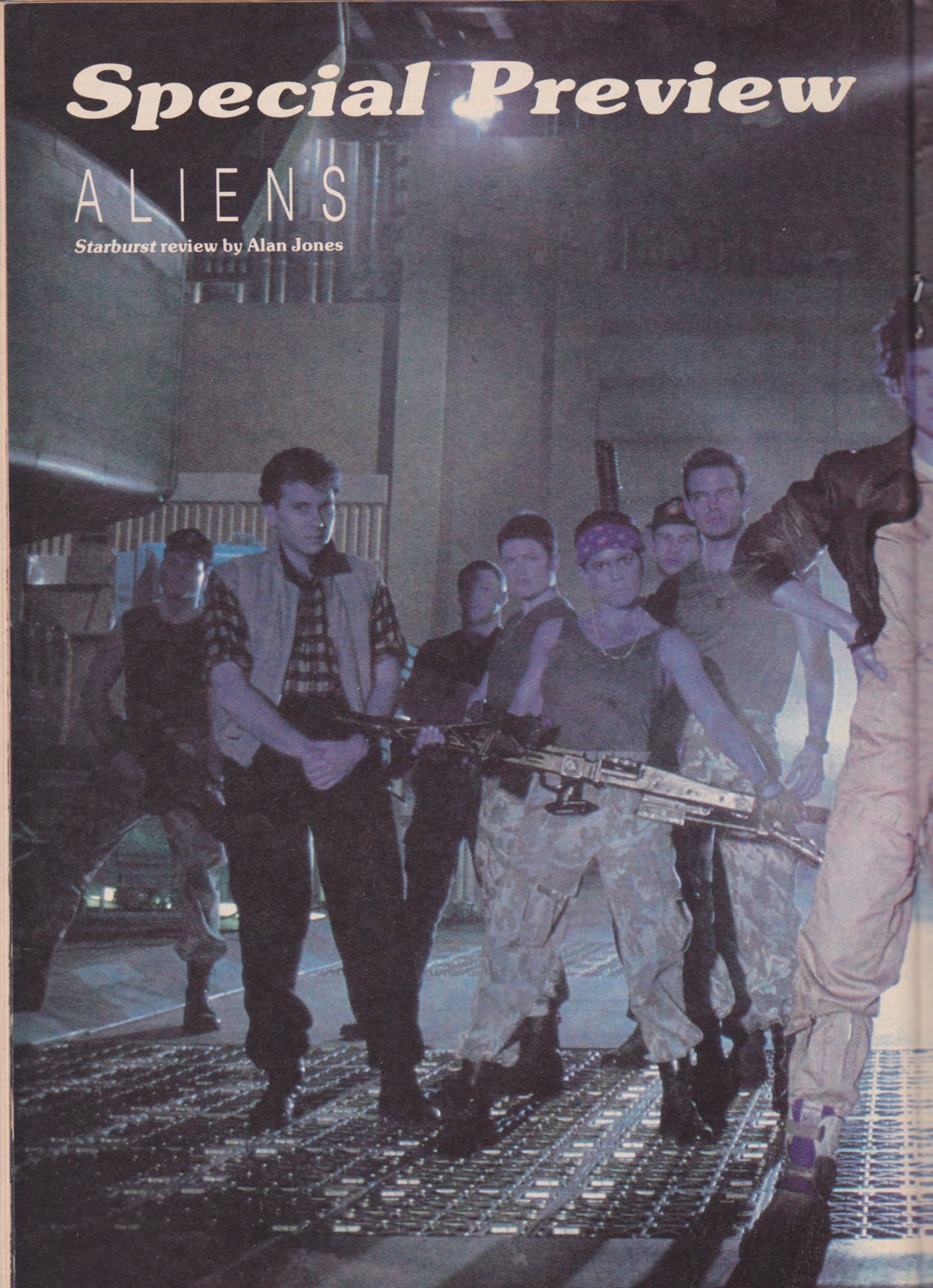
Lou the alien rushes back in, tearing off his space-suit.

Lou: Hey, Dennis, they took mah bathroom away. You got one?■

Special Preview

ALIENS

Starburst review by Alan Jones



AT last! Just when you were beginning to lose faith in a major studio's ability to provide a genuine genre blockbuster this year – along comes *Aliens*. Yes, everybody's favourite bio-mechanoid is back and director James Cameron has got us in the palm of his hand once again. As with *The Terminator*, Cameron re-interprets the accepted science-fiction/horror cliches – and then some – to devastating effect to provide us with the best monster movie for a long while. If *Aliens* doesn't make it to the top of every *Starburst* reader's Ten Best list, I will be very surprised.

The most shocking thing about *Aliens* is that it is very nearly too good to be true. We should never forget for one minute how much of a debt Cameron owes to Ridley Scott's original film – in theme, basic 'look', claustrophobic atmosphere, and to some degree the handling of the reprised Giger-inspired aliens themselves – but his own film is more than an affectionate translation of nostalic imagery, it is a powerfully brilliant nightmare vision in its own right. And a more impressive broad-based entertainment I doubt you will see for a long time to come.

Cameron's much anticipated written and directed sequel is far more outrageous and American in tone than *Alien* but it is up to Sigourney Weaver, once again playing Officer Ripley, to continue the story 57 years after the first film ended. Found drifting on her spaceship in hypersleep she is rescued by the authorities on Gateway Station orbiting the Earth but they don't believe her far-fetched story about an alien creature which gestates inside the human body. Plagued by bad dreams, she settles down to a menial job until she learns that colonists sent to live on the Planet Archeron – where she first encountered the bio-mechanoid creatures – have gone missing while trying to set up huge atmospheric compressors to make the air breathable for future generations. Reluctantly Ripley agrees to accompany a squad of highly trained space marines on a 'recce' to search for and destroy the enemy she warned everyone about in the first place. Although the mission seems doomed to failure from the start, the star platoon find an ally in the sole human survivor of the mutant onslaught – a little girl nicknamed Newt. And it is she and Ripley who uncover Archeron's deadly secret and confront a nemesis far worse than either of them had dreamed existed.

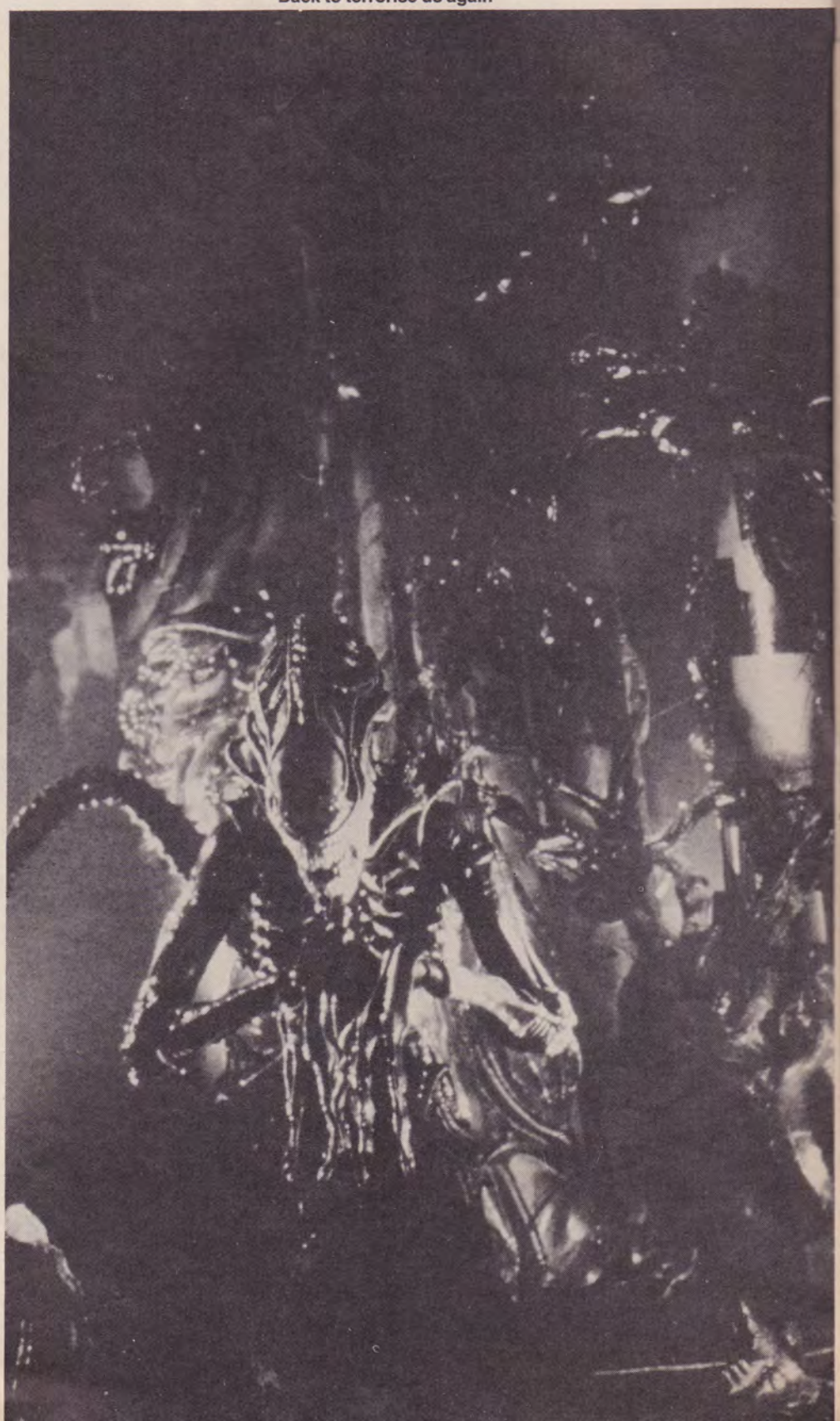
Aliens really is the scariest movie in years. Very rarely do I cower under my seat or cover my eyes from sheer terror, but I have to admit to doing this at least four times during the length of *Aliens*' action-packed 137 minutes. Whether it's the spider-like face-huggers scuttling across the floor in pursuit of a human neck to entwine, or the encroaching army of aliens crawling through the air-ducts, Cameron expertly plays on audience expectation for the maximum shock effect. In doing so he also conjures up the most haunting nightmare images ever to have stalked across the screen. Cameron's brilliance lies in stylishly reworking all of Ridley Scott's watershed visuals while never once seeming to rip them off but stamping them with his own trademark instead. And although the film deals with numerous aliens this time around, his masterstroke is to show them even less than the one in *Alien*. An organised chaos of tricksey lighting and clever quick cuts subliminally relays the stark horror in the most galvanising way. Any fears that *The Terminator* was a flash in the pan are thankfully eliminated by what many will hail as a sci-fi classic.

The unkindest criticisms anyone could lever at *Aliens* are that it resembles *Rambo* in outer space, some of the model shots suffer from poor back projection and that inconsistencies abound. A good example of the latter being the need of the marine corps to bother wearing standard camouflage gear in an uncharted terrain. However, it would be churlish to carp about these minor aspects as they don't detract anything from the full breathtaking scope of this slick and supremely well-realised screamer.

Although it's a full hour into running time before the first major jolt rivets you to the seat, *Aliens* bristles with invention, sharp humorous dialogue and uniformly excellent acting across the board. Sigourney Weaver strips again for action and has never been better. Her major achievement here is in making Ripley undergo a believable personal quest from understandable cowardice through to the sassy, fully motivated saviour of the human race. As in *Alien*, she really comes into her own during the latter stages, but it's the sight of her reappearance wearing a Powerloader metal suit ready to do battle with the alien Queen that raises the roof with resounding cheers. And Michael Biehn (so good in *The Terminator*), adds very able support as the hard-bitten corporal elevated by unusual circumstances to be leader of the alien eradication operation.

Stan Winston's alien effects are beyond praise. And the same goes for James Horner's fabulous score, Brian Johnson and the Skotak brothers' visual effects, Peter Lamont's production design and every other key person who had a hand in making *Aliens* the truly wonderful fantasy experience it is. I haven't been this enthusiastic about a film for ages and I know you won't need any urging from me to see it either. Just get ready for a rare cinematic event and be prepared to pack a sleeping bag to ensure you see it the moment it opens. ■

Back to terrorise us again



Ripley and Newt – Real heroines at last?

ALIENS

INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN JOHNSON

"ALIENS", says Brian Johnson, who who was Post Production Visual Effects Supervisor on the movie, "is a radically different film from its predecessor. Although the action takes place within the confines of a space situation threatened by a particularly obnoxious life form it is a deeper movie with more human involvement."

Johnson is in a position to make the assessment because he also supervised the visual effects for *Alien*. In fact, he was awarded a Hollywood Oscar for his work on Ridley Scott's film. He received an Oscar for his effects contributions to George Lucas' *The Empire Strikes Back*.

"Every director has a different approach," says Johnson. "Ridley's was definitely visual; he cared for the visual content more than the human element and more or less let the actors fend for themselves. Because they happened to include some very experienced actors like Ian Holm and John Hurt, who were very capable of doing so, there was no problem. But in *Aliens* James Cameron has cast some younger people, not so well established, whose performances he moulded. They needed his guidance and the result is a film far more concerned with the characters than was the original film. In *Alien* they were expendable, one by one, but now we are much more concerned with their lives and fate. This is high drama, emotional drama, in space. When I saw it in its completed form I felt the same excitement about it as I had felt years before when I saw the first print of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. It really is a stunning film, so full of action – great value for the money."

Brian Johnson came into the industry 28 years ago when he joined the camera department of Shepperton Studios, England. Later he began to study special effects there under the late Les Bowie, an acknowledged pioneer who would later receive an Oscar for the first *Superman*. Johnson's first movie as an effects man was *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*.

In the 1970s he emerged as a Special Effects Supervisor in his own right and he is the first to acknowledge the debt his expertise owes to working alongside American special effects experts like George Lucas established in California (Industrial Light and Magic).

"It always dismays me when I hear English film personalities declare that our special effects people in England are the best in the world," he says. "I would not deny that we have fine British effects people but ever since *Star Wars* visual effects have been a combination of practical floor effects with effects produced by motion control in California or in situations which owe their techniques to the pioneering work done in California. When *Star Wars* was made nobody in England had the kind of equipment Lucas was pioneering and experimenting with. In a relatively minor way I have established in England facilities similar to those in California but it would require an enormous input of capital to set up here the kind of hardware Industrial Light and Magic has to offer its customers."

Johnson's company is called Arkadon Motion Control and it has 11,000 square feet of studio space beside the River Thames on the Buckinghamshire-Berkshire border. That was where many of the *Aliens* post production motion control effects were achieved. Peerless Camera Company in London also contributed some motion control shots to the film. During principal photography the visual effects technicians worked at Pinewood Studios, where the live action main unit was also filming.

Brian Johnson: "With special effects films most of the effects cannot be created until actual studio production has been completed and there is a roughcut to show the director what he needs. James Cameron had story-boarded his film very meticulously but it is always the case that some elements have to be changed or modified during the period of principal photography. But when I joined the company during the last stages of the main unit's work I found that James Cameron had such a good grasp of visual effects techniques that at times it was like working with another special effects supervisor. This is quite rare and it meant that I could get a very clear concept from the start of what Jim wanted for his movie."

Johnson believes that unless stories come along which are as strong as *Aliens* in terms of human drama and excitement the space movie genre may have peaked and that there are noticeable trends now towards romantic dramas with human rather than special effects content, films which need no special effects at all. He thinks that movie technology will concentrate itself on new ways of making movies – film-making by computers able to produce on video the high definition of present feature films. "It is on the way," he says, "but what is unstoppable is an action-filled drama with a strong human story. *Aliens* was inspired by *Alien*. But it is nevertheless a true original." ■

E.T.

THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

E.T. is back and alive and doing very well thank you. After phoning home three years ago and picking up a space taxi he is apparently stuck in a time loop. Forever destined to wander away from his parents on an alien planet, to be left stranded and go through the most tear-jerking adventures. The God of his world, Spielberg, has given him this fate. By putting poor E.T. through these adventures every so many years in the cinema he reckons hordes of humans will part with more metal and paper tokens than could be gathered from a video tape and television release.

In the United States and Canada, it established the record box office gross of $359,687.000 in the first year of its release. It is estimated that more than 200,000,000 people world-wide have already seen *E.T.*

The phenomenon of *E.T.* included instant celebrity status for the stars and widespread attention for those behind the camera. Lines of dialogue entered the vernacular. In particular "phone home!" was recently seen on the back of a royal coach conveying certain newly-weds.

Along with the public popularity came a long list of awards and significant honours. Amongst them Spielberg was named a Best Director by the American National Society of Film Critics. Out of nine Academy Awards it won four.

E.T. according to Spielberg, is "about human values. It's about the understanding people have towards one another. It's about compassion and love." With that background *E.T.* has been put to use for charity, health and education.

E.T.'s return to Britain certainly looks likely to be successful if box office taking of its first week's return are anything to go by. ■

JULY 12th and 13th saw the National Film Theatre play host to the first British Tele-Fantasy convention. Organised by the BFI, it screened a range of Sci-Fi series, some of which *Starburst* has covered in the past (*Adam Adamant Lives! Doomwatch, Timeslip*) and some of which *Starburst* will be covering in the future (*Ace of Wands, The Tomorrow People, UFO*). Timothy Robins reports.

U.F.O.: Proved most disconcerting

PAST VISIONS OF THE FUTURE – FUN FOR FANS?

'PAST Visions of the Future' was a retrospective weekend of some three decades of British TV Science Fiction/Fantasy. It was held under the auspices of the British (code word for the South of England) Film Institute and screened at the National (code word for London) Film Theatre on the second weekend of July.

First of its kind

"This is the first event of its kind in Britain", Tony Mechele told me on the Saturday. Tony was one of the four organisers who decided it was about time many fondly remembered TV series deserved to be taken out of mothballs and given an airing. "I approached the NFT's Sheila Whitaker and she said, 'Come back and tell me what you can show'. We sat down and thought about what we could put on and then tried to discover what existed and what had been junked."

What they ended up with included the obvious (*Doctor Who, Blake's Seven, Space 1999*), the semi-legendary (*Quatermass, Out of the Unknown, The Andromeda Breakthrough*), the obscure (*Counterstrike, The Incredible Robert Baldick, Casting the Runes*), the frankly ludicrous (*Supercar, The Tomorrow People, The Secret Service*) and a good deal more beside. In the end twenty-nine series were represented, but where, I wondered, had all this material come from? Tony explained. "Fifty percent is BBC, 40 percent is ITC, 10 percent Thames and Yorkshire TV and a very small percent things like *Quatermass* and *The Andromeda Breakthrough*, has come from the National Film Archive, although it's BBC material."

The organisers wanted to screen as many examples of British TV science fiction and fantasy as possible. This ideal was not without its problems. For a start much of the material no longer existed. "With the ITC we knew what did exist because, unlike the BBC, they don't tend to dump stuff willey-nilley. For instance, with the *Out of the Unknown* series, we asked for specific episodes and they weren't available. We found the Nigel Kneale play, 'The Chopper', had gone to Zambia or some Eastern country years ago and had never come back – but according to the BBC it was still in their archives."

The BBC material proved particularly difficult. "Although episodes existed, they did so in many types of format. Take *Doomwatch*, some were on the American NTSC system, others on one-inch tape and others on two-inch tape and U-matic. Some episodes, like *Adam Adamant Lives!* only existed as slashprints. Slashprints means that the episode exists but doesn't have a soundtrack. A lot of BBC material is on 35mm and has a separate magnetic soundtrack. In some instances the soundtracks have been lost." The result is the disconcerting loss of sound effects and incidental music.

NFT nerves

Technical obstacles aside, the organisers also had contend with a failure of nerve on the part of the NFT. Despite the success, two years earlier, of an event devoted to episodes of *Doctor Who*, they felt that old British TV series would not draw a sufficiently large audience. Two performances of *Chorus Line* were scheduled for the larger of the NFT's theatres on Saturday evening.

"That's why *Quatermass and the Pit* isn't being shown in its entirety. Things like *Thunderbirds, The Champions* and *The Flipside of Dominic Hyde* were all dropped. We also had to drop the panel discussion. Originally we thought we'd have a two-hour session with four or five celebrities." Despite this, a number of celebrities made surprise appearances and mingled with the audience. Producer, Michael Bryant (*Blake's Seven*) chatted to fans in the bar

and Nigel Kneale gave a brief introduction to his popular play *The Stone Tape,* then signed autographs for his many admirers.

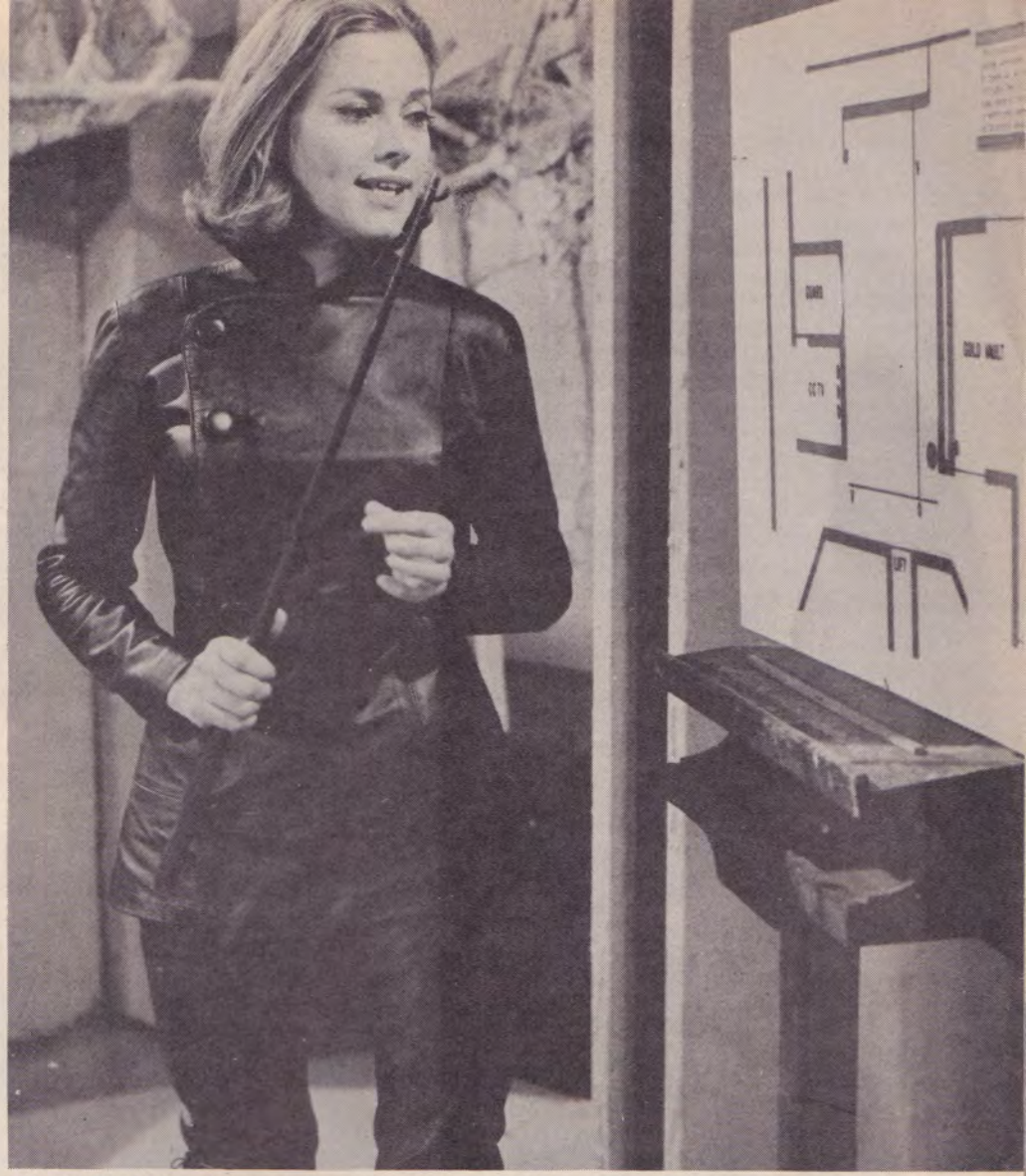
A little creaky

As for the series themselves, some proved, to use Tony Mechele's words, 'a little creaky'. At points, *Doctor Who* (The War Machines), *Quatermass* and *Supercar* (to name just three), brought gales of good-humoured but well-deserved laughter from the audience. With *The Quatermass Experiment,* the laughter began when it was announced a faulty rocket was about to crash-land on Croydon. It continued when the rocket had crashed (in Wimbledon) and an erstwhile scientist was told to check the rocket's hull temperature. He simply walked up and put his hand on it, announcing the temperature had fallen to about 100 degrees. As much as people may have groaned at the absurdities (the lines given female characters brought gagging and guffawing), there were groans of disappointment when the series wasn't shown through to its conclusion. It remained compelling as drama and as a slice of television history.

In fact, that just about sums up all the serials that were shown. The never-before repeated episode of *The Survivors* and the witty *Randal and Hopkirk (Deceased)* were among the most popular episodes screened. *Supercar* was judged to be more like *Four Feather Falls* than *Fireball XL5* and *UFO* again proved just how disconcerting that series could be with the rarely screened episode 'The Long Sleep'.

Tony Mechele hopes that, if 'Past Visions of the Future' proves a success (attendance figures have yet to be announced), it will pave the way for a larger convention, although it's likely that the next BFI TV retrospective of this nature will focus on spy series.

If any criticisms are to be levelled at the convention it would be about the lack of publicity and booking information. It turned out that the much vaunted weekly membership could only be obtained by turning up at the NFT in person. For potential audiences in the provinces this necessitated an extra trip to the capital as some screenings were sold out weeks in advance. Screening single episodes of multi-episode stories is also not the happiest compromise. Individual episodes rarely stand up on their own and watching them always seems a little futile.



THE AVENGERS: Originally made on 405 line 2 in. Videotape – another technical obstacle

TIMESLIP: Rare episodes seen again

'Past Visions of the Future' proved an excellent starting point for a more serious, less rose-tinted and fannish look at British Television Science Fiction which has still to be firmly located within a historical context. It stimulated the already growing interest in the past output of British Television, an interest largely begun by Channel Four's repeats and one likely to continue, with ITV and BBC plans to expand their schedules. At the very least it was, as Tony Mechel succinctly put it, "Fun for fans".

Before you go, here is as good a place as any to mention the BBC is desperately seeking series and other old programmes to return to their archives. While fans might have you believe this worldwide search is only for *Doctor Who* episodes, it is, in fact, for all types of material. If you know of the existence or location of any, please don't hesitate to contact the BBC.

In the second part of our interview, Russell Mulcahy looks back at the year he spent on *Highlander*, the team he worked with and the end result . . .

***Starburst* interview by Alan Jones**

HIGHLANDER™

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE

ONE of the criticisms levelled at Mulcahy's previous film *Razorback* concerned his handling of actors – or more to the point, the lack of it. He was only too well aware of this and made a concerted effort with *Highlander* to give the actors the feedback they required. He continued, "I never had a problem with Sean Connery as he is such a professional although he can't stand inefficiency of any kind. Occasionally we would have what came to be known as our 'Connery Meetings'. He would group us all together and air his views on why so and so wasn't doing his job correctly. This was free advice – very expensive free advice I might add – that none of us needed. But when he saw the rushes, things changed. I don't think he ever believed seven days would be enough time to get all of his material in the can. He was just as surprised as the rest of us when we actually finished on time. Connery and Lambert got along well together as their scenes were shot chronologically. The teacher/pupil bond became very visible as they developed an on – as well as off-screen relationship. Clancy Brown's first day was with Connery, and because of the limited time, I told Clancy that although we had five cameras in the scene, four would be on Sean and the others on his back. Clancy had to do the reverses later with a double. It seemed to upset his method acting somewhat but we sorted it out".

Mulcahy feels he achieved a lot with

Clancy Brown as the Kurgan though as he explained. "As predictable as it may have seemed to depict ultimate evil as a punk, if you look closely at Clancy's costume you'll see one of Sean earrings plus other assorted trophies of the people he has killed throughout the ages. In the original script he was more the traditional punk with the standard mohican hair-do whereas I saw him as a rocker in dirty leather complete with a stylish montage of conquests. As for the tattoo on his head, I felt it was a reminder of his ancestry. As they threw strangers to dogs, I thought the race would do something as weird as tattoo a baby at birth. The safety pins in his neck scar-tissue were a concession to the punk ethic, although I argued that a really smart immortal would probably wear a metal collar".

After a series of less than enthusiastic previews in America for *Highlander*, Mulcahy was asked by the film's American distributor 20th Century Fox to make certain changes in his original cut amounting to nine minutes in all. Thankfully Cannon, who now own the rights to the film, saw the sense of reinstating these scenes when the new version failed to ignite at the box-office.

One of these was a sequence Mulcahy financed himself to explain the character of Lambert's secretary, Sheila Gish. A spoken prologue and epilogue by Sean Connery were also added when it became obvious that audiences were confused by the 'prize' won by Lambert during the closing minutes of the film. Said Mulcahy, "Prize was always the wrong word all along. It seemed more monetary than anything else but we could never find another apt expression. Even if we had invented a word, which we discussed at one stage, it would still have been just as confusing. In the original script Macleod had some lines that intimated he was off to Brazil to help quash a revolution. The added epilogue makes it clearer that he is now at one with all living things – an amoeba, or a person thousands of miles away. The sequel – if there is a sequel

which I now doubt – would have concerned what exactly he did with this unimaginable power. My feelings about my original version of *Highlander* are that you had to work at the story. It wasn't handed to you on a plate which I still don't think is such a bad thing".

Mixed emotions

It is with mixed emotions that Mulcahy now looks back on the last 12 months it has taken to get *Highlander* finally on show in Britain in the way he had originally intended it. How successful does he think the film is in retrospect?

"Well at least it's fun to watch", he said. "The biggest problem I had with the film was – given the fact that immortals can't die apart from decapitation – cliff-hangers in say the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* tradition had to be reinterpreted. I know the story really isn't about that, being more of a sweeping epic, but it did cause a lot of initial headaches. Thank God we didn't show one of the immortals entering a vaporising machine otherwise we would have all been in trouble! I'm very pleased with the climax because I didn't want to have the screen cluttered with cinematic references, machinery or the usual trappings. Anyway I used all of those up in the fight between Connery and Brown in the Forge. That's where the influences of Wagner, Errol Flynn and Ray Harryhausen really show. As hard as it was just getting Macleod's story across, I would have liked to have shown more of the Kurgan with his family, and what exactly happened to him through the centuries, as a parallel to the main narrative, but then we would have had a three-hour movie. All of that would have been dealt with in the sequel. I figured the only way to resuscitate the Kurgan would have been contained in the fact that he raped Macleod's Scottish wife. That way a lookalike son could have been pulled into the front line. I know we established that immortals are impotent but . . ."

Christopher Lambert

On the subject of Christopher Lambert, Mulcahy has nothing but praise for his performance as the grudging immortal. He said, "Christopher added a dimension to the film that enhanced it beyond my wildest dreams. It was the little touches he added which made *Highlander* a pleasure for me. If there is any unifying theme in both my film and video work, it is simply an individual reacting to obstacles within a set environment. I don't mean that in a heavy pretentious way. Christopher was the perfect loner which I suppose says a lot about myself. Actually, I was very pleased with Clancy's performance too. He alone made the climactic car chase work. Audiences think they see more cars crash than they actually do solely because Clancy's inter-reaction with captive Roxanne is so powerful. I've seen better car chases on television, to be frank – it's the focus on Clancy being terrifying that gives the sequence its solid base".

Mulcahy also feels that no one has the grounds to call *Highlander* that mainstream critic standby of 'an elongated MTV video'. He said, "I was so conscious

The Kurgan takes communion?

Roxanne Hart as Brenda Wyatt

of keeping a tight hold of the reins on such a strong narative. Someone asked me the other day if I thought *Highlander* was a 'hip' film. Well it isn't *Diva* or *Repo Man,* but I think it is unique. It isn't a comic book movie either – more a folk tale on a grander scale. The reason for this is that I don't feel I'm copying somebody else's style anymore. When I started off making videos, I blatantly copied Ingmar Bergman, Ken Russell and Fellini. Just prior to starting *Highlander,* I felt I wanted it to be like Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon.* But I soon realised there was no way I could keep the shots as long as he did! There aren't really many strong directorial styles anymore. I hope people don't think *Highlander* is faceless and packaged to death".

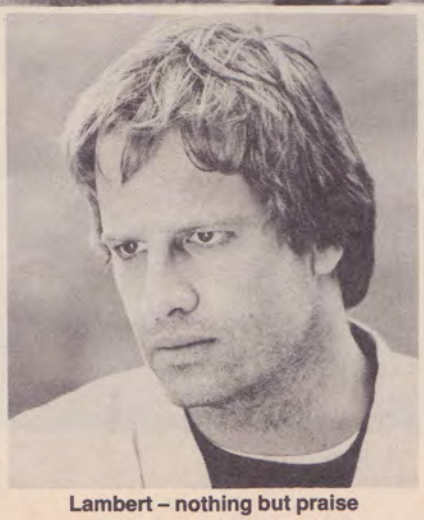
Stallone – a fan

Despite the American reviews and poor box-office, *Highlander* has been packing audiences in for months in France. Perhaps *Highlander 2* will be made after all. Mulcahy does have one American fan though – Sylvester Stallone. Stallone telephoned Mulcahy to tell him how much he enjoyed the film and not to worry about the reviews because look at what they said about *Rocky IV.* Stallone is definitely one ally not to be sniffed at.

For the time being though, Mulcahy has a number of projects on the back burner. He said, "There is talk at the moment of a modern-day musical along the lines of *Oliver Twist.* What I'm most excited about is an idea for television called *Weird TV.* A comparison could be drawn to *The Twilight Zone* I suppose, but here we break the rules of programming because you never know how long a story is or where it begins or finishes. A story may last 10 seconds before moving to another which could last five or forty minutes. So you could be following a character who would walk past a shop window in which would unfold another story of unspecified length and you'd catch up with him in the context of the new tale. I have British financing for this series idea. *The Wild Boys* I've decided to give up on. It has caused me nothing but frustration. All the writers I've had lengthy meetings with to put across what I thought were the important concepts have simply gone away and written out chapters of the book changing certain characters names. I thought Burrough's himself might be the key as my idea of where the story should go in terms of direction was lacking in some respects. But now I think the whole idea was a mistake in the first place".

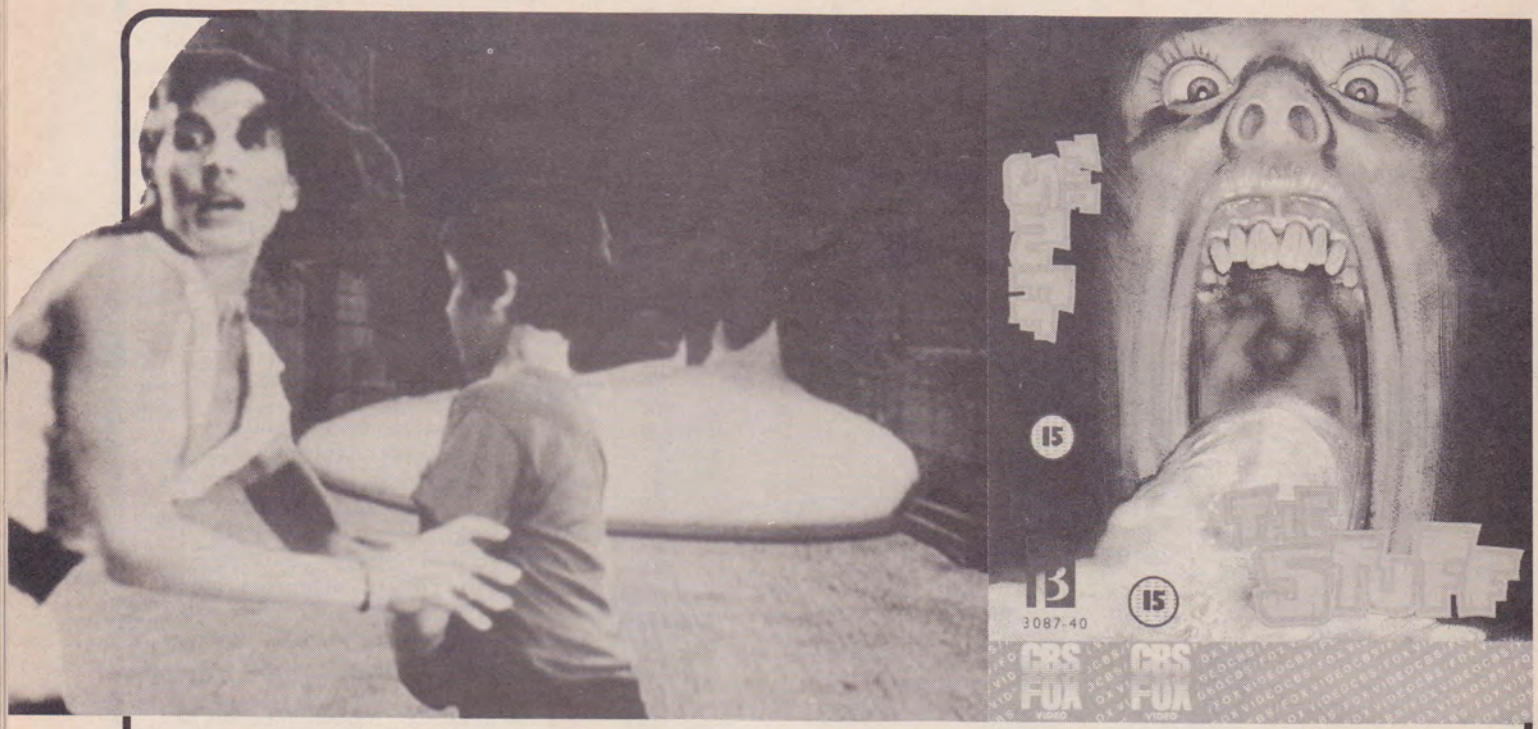
Does Mulcahy think he is constricted by the label of Video Director? He ended, "If I do have that tag, I don't really care anymore. If I have any talent as a director, it is to surround myself with creative people I can get along with. I know I'm not an auteur. I choose to make fantasy thrillers because I like them. I wouldn't want to make something like *Out of Africa.* Who wants to film forever? I guess I do. My mother is always telling me she has kept my teaching scholarship at home just in case. But I'll carry on. Why not? It's the only think I know. I'm actually working at something that would have been a hobby. Even if I wasn't paid for it I'd do it anyway". ■

Connery with Mulcahy



Lambert – nothing but praise

Free Video! Free Video! Free Video!



Competition – The Stuff Videos

Stuff the video, oh sorry, the video of *The Stuff* is out. This is your chance to win one of the ten copies we have available.

The Stuff was reviewed in a past issue of *Starburst* but just to remind you *The Stuff* is a monstrous yogurt-like dessert that devours its host from within. Industrial saboteur David 'Moe' Rutherford and cookie mogul Chocolate Chip Charlie search for the answer to the mystery of this protoplasmic 'food'. Charming stuff eh!

Well the video can be yours . . . just send a postcard containing your name, address, video format (VHS/Beta) and . . . a catch phrase which could be used to sell the protoplasmic 'food' – eg "buy the stuff because it's good!" (but better I hope).

The ten best entries to reach the *Starburst* offices by 26th August will be sent the video.

Starburst (Stuff Video)
38 Melrose Avenue
Wimbledon Park
LONDON SW19 8BY

FANtasia

compiled by JOHN AINSWORTH

Welcome to what will hopefully be the first of many fan-orientated columns, because that is exactly what 'Fantasia' is all about, fans. Over the next few months we shall be taking a closer look at the many different aspects of the various devoted fan movements that have been generated by some of the best *and* worst of television and cinema. This will hopefully include details of all the major fan clubs and societies, reviews of conventions and fanzines and a look at some of the fan orientated merchandise often produced by fans themselves, such as Audio Visuals *Doctor Who* audio plays and the American, all-new *Star Trek* novels. Hopefully, each issue will focus on a particular fandom, ie *The Prisoner, Blakes Seven, Star Trek* or even *The Rocky Horror Show*. This doesn't mean to say that we'll be totally neglecting other people completely, and there will also be the regular feature of Convention Calendar which will give up-to-date information on up and coming conventions and other events of interest.

To launch this month's premiere column, here is the first Convention Calendar. I'd like to think that there are no omissions but that's probably wishful thinking. If your convention isn't mentioned here or you have more up-to-date details please write in, I'd be more than glad to give you a mention. Remember though, details must reach me **at least** a month in advance of publication, so unless your convention/event is in October onwards, I'm afraid you're already too late. Sorry.

CONVENTION CALENDAR

CYBERCON
Subject: Doctor Who
Organisers: Phoenix Association
Date(s): 16th and 17th August 1986
Venue: Renold Theatre, UMIST, Manchester
Cost: Saturday and Sunday £19.95; Saturday only £12.95; Sunday only £12.00. (The costs include an obligatory £1.00 charge for membership of Phoenix, for which you will receive a membership card and two news letters a year.) Reductions of £1.00 per person are also available for block bookings of over five people.
Contact: Phoenix Registration Office, 31 Birdhill Avenue, Reading RG2 7JT.
Guests: David Banks (Cyberleader), Nicholas Courtney, Frazer Hines, Ian Marter, Roy Skelton (Dalek Voice), Stephen Thorn (Azal, Omega, Ogron, Eldrad), Deborah Watling, Andrew Skilleter, Philip Martin, Nigel Robinson, Adrian Wrigglesford (who?), and many more.
Remarks: Accommodation at £13.00 a night which includes breakfast and an evening meal is also available. Dealers and fanzine sellers may book a table by writing to the registration address enclosing an sae. The organisers hope to present a cabaret on the Saturday night. This is the second Phoenix event and on the strength of last year's Genesis Convention (also held in Manchester), I strongly recommend it. Proceeds in aid of The Foundation for the Study of Infant Mortality.

PANOPTICON VII
Subject: Doctor Who
Organisers: Doctor Who Appreciation Society
Date(s): 6th and 7th September 1986
Venue: Imperial College, South Kensington, London
Cost: (Non members) One day only £16.50; two days £29.00
Contact: DWAS Event Registration Office, 21 Norwich Road, Exwick, Exeter, Devon EX4 8DN
Guests: Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee, Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant, Verity Lambert (first producer), John Nathan-Turner (last producer?). Also Adrienne (blink and you'll miss me) Hill, William Russell, John Levene, Mark Strickson, Victor Pemberton, and many more.
Remarks: Fanzine tables will be available at a charge of £2.00. There will be a cabaret on the Saturday evening for which there will be an extra charge.

Recent DWAS events have been a little disappointing, but Panopticon VII seems to be shaping up quite nicely, with a very impressive guest list. This event should be particularly interesting as it seems almost certain that the long-awaited first episode of the new season will be aired on Saturday the 6th. The first live transmission of a new Doctor Who, at a convention?

THE DENTON CONVENTION
Subject: The Rocky Horror Show and Shock Treatment
Organisers: Independent Convention
Date(s): 13th and 14th September 1986
Venue: The Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Middx.
Cost: £12.00
Contact: The Denton Convention, 16 Tonbridge Road, West Molesey, Surrey KT8 0EL
Guests: Ruby Wax, Darlene Johnson, Michael White, Charles (that man's got no ***ing neck) Gray and Jonathan Adams.
Remarks: Other attractions include a fancy dress parade, a dealers room, Transylvanian of the year contest, a disco and, of course, a chance to meet fellow Transylvanians.

Proceeds to Save the Children Fund.

Fans meet the stars at a 'DWAS' Convention

FANTASYCON XI
Subject: Fantasy Science Fiction and Horror
Organisers: The British Fantasy Society
Date(s): 26th, 27th and 28th September 1986
Venue: Midland Hotel, New Street, Birmingham
Cost: Full attending membership £10.00; supporting membership £2.00
Contact: Fantasycon XI, 15 Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey SM4 5DE
Guests: Guest of Honour: Dennis Etchinson; Special Guest: Jody Scott; Master of Ceremonies: Samantha Lee. Also Clive Barker, Steve Gallagher, Guy N. Smith, Roger Johnson, Adrian Cole and many, many more.
Remarks: The highlights of the convention will be the Awards Banquet and the presentation of the BFS Awards on the Sunday.

SPACE CITY
Subject: Blakes Seven
Organisers: Independent Convention
Date(s): 11th October 1986
Venue: Cantley House, Milton Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG11 5QG
Cost: £11.75. Children under 12 £4.75 (lunch is included)
Contact: Ann Brown, 37A Byfleet Avenue, Old Basing, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG24 0HR (when writing please enclose four *additional* sae's for progress reports).
Remarks: Although I unfortunately missed last year's event, I heard very good things said about it. Well worth a look, keep the Blakes Seven flag flying. Proceeds to the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals.

SOL III
Subject: Star Trek
Organisers: Star Trek Action Group
Date(s): 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th May 1987
Venue: Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool
Cost:
Contact: Sol III, 39 Dersingham Avenue, Manor Park, London E12 5QF
Guests: To be announced
Remarks: Events include disco, auctions, fashion/drama, fancy dress, art show, Sunday night "theme" party(?).

This is the 23rd major British Star Trek convention.

When writing to any of the above please, please enclose an sae.

Well that's it for this month. If anyone out there is "doing something" that we may be interested in, please let us know. Free publicity can't be bad. See you in a month's time.

Clan of the Cave Bear – Will it stand the test of time?

It's only a MOVIE

BY DAVID DUPONT

PREHISTORIC fiction (pre-fi, if I may coin a phrase) is relatively new territory in the film world, and in order to stand the test of critical eyes, it must, like its science fiction counterparts, at least give some semblance of authenticity.

This film, based on the best-selling book by Jean M. Auel, is all about the stone-age adventures of a Cro-Magnon girl (Ayla) growing up with a tribe of more primitive Neanderthals. She is initially treated as an outcast, because of her obvious height and blonde hair. One has to assume that they weren't living in California at the time. And like all good Californian girls, she tries to compete with the guys in the locker-room, by learning to hunt. The rest of the film concerns her struggle for cave-girl's lib against all the little Maradonnas in the tribe.

The story succeeded in holding one's interest after an initially slow start and I could tell that the film-makers had gone to a lot of trouble in giving it an authentic look, but I kept on getting those niggly feelings that something wasn't quite real enough – nothing as blatant as cavemen running around with digital watches – but something was lurking there that gave the film a modern feel.

I can't blame the script, as the whole thing was sub-titled, and the scenery was as stunning and huge as it should have been in such an epic. The pace was staggered at times, but then the film had to cover a period of about twenty years using a series of incidents in Ayla's life. The acting was such that the characters involved conveyed enough meaning in their grunting and groaning to make themselves understood in a way that the Rambo films never could. The performances of Pamela Reed and James Remar as Ayla's foster-parents deserve a special mention. However, there was something wrong that I just wasn't able to put my finger on until I stepped out into the bright summer sunshine. Then two interesting aspects of the film dawned upon me.

Firstly, the Germans would have loved to have used this type of film in the war. Blonde Aryan type forced to live among the inferior races in a life of degradation and humiliation, until one day her superior intelligence and physique defeats the barbarians. Wow, talk about subliminal Ramboism . . . OK. I'm only kidding, but it does seem that it is an extraordinarily naive idea, one which has been used throughout history by conquering nations against their unfortunate enemies. But what really got me wondering was, how did a blonde Aryan type end up roaming around the country-side some twenty thousand or so years before her time?

I thought that we were all black-skinned at that stage in our evolution, and that blonde Nordic types didn't appear on the scene until about 10,000BC and this film was supposed to take place at around 35,000BC.

Not only that, but the supposedly primitive Neanderthals with whom our heroic Barbie-doll (TM) was living must have had a plentiful supply of razor blades for their arms and legs, to make them look so neat and tidy. So all you Pre-fi buffs please write in and show me the error of my ways.

Mind you, if you compare this film with *Quest for Fire,* they both have their anachronistic foibles (such as Q for F's straw huts which couldn't possibly have been around in 80,000BC). But for all its faults *Quest for Fire* stands the test of time and will remain a cult film, whereas *Clan*, I believe, will not (unless they do a double-bill, of course). For one thing, there is not a lot of humour in *Clan,* something which is vital in a film which relies solely on the skills of its actors to win the sympathy of the audience. Unfortunately, *The Clan of Cave Bear* has to rely too heavily on the central character of Ayla (Daryl Hannah) which means that all the other characters take on the semblance of hangers-on. In *Quest for Fire,* all four of the main parts are developed in such a way to enable a great deal of interaction between them, causing the audience to warm to them. Take for example the way one of them tries to pick up a bunch of fruit. As soon as he picks up one too many, another drops out of his hands, which he can't understand. Or the way they discover humour by a rock falling on one's head. I also found that the specially created body-language and linguistics used in *Clan* were

completely wasted, whereas I can still remember words like 'Arthra' (fire) and 'Dondra' (trees) from *Quest of Fire*.

I'm afraid that Ms. Hannah's superbly strong performance not-with-standing, the *Clan of the Cave Bear* ends up being a flawed attempt which takes itself too seriously. And I have some sympathy for authoress Jean M. Auel, who is trying to sue the film for ruining the spirit of her far richer novel. Nonetheless, it is certainly worth a look-in, and will surely help Daryl Hannah in her 'Quest for Serious Parts'.

As the gorgeous pouting Ayla wanders off into the glorious pre-historic sunset at the end of the film, we are aware that the film-makers would dearly love to make the sequel of her adventures in The Valley of the Horses, whether or not the public wishes it. But of course it will all depend upon the pending lawsuit and on Mrs Auel's goodwill. ■

Right: "How do I get out of this movie?"
Below: Lunch-time on location

◆CLASSIFIED◆

◆MAIL ORDER◆

Media Merchandise
From Dr Who to Hancock. Blake's 7 to The Avengers. The widest selection anywhere. Send 17p stamp for Catalogue to: John Fitton (Books & Magazines), 1 Orchard Way, Hensall, Nr. Goole, W. Humberside.

THE THIRTEENTH TRIBE: The British Battlestar Galactica fan club with an international membership. Quarterly newsletters, zines, photos and other merchandise available. SAE for details to: Miss Lesley Sapsford, 70 The Mead, Carpenders Park, Watford, Herts. WD1 5BU.

◆SHOPS◆

WONDERWORLD – 26 Ashley Road, Boscomb, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 4LH. Phone: 0202 37733. This shop is a complete FANTASY! Not only do we stock the entire range of Marvel, DC, Epic, First, Eclipse and so on . . . but we have THOUSANDS of back-issues plus Portfolios, Artwork, T-shirts, badges, Doctor Who gear, Dungeons and Dragons, Videos, Books, accessories. So why not visit us or send us your SAE? What's to lose?

◆SHOPS◆

Sheffield Space Centre

SHEFFIELD SPACE CENTRE. 485 London Road, Heeley, Sheffield S2 4HL. Telephone Sheffield 581040. We stock a large selection of S/F Fantasy paperbacks, American comics, Portfolios, Magazines etc. Open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10am – 5pm. Saturday 9am. Closed Wednesday. SAE for list.

To advertise in the *Starburst* Classified costs either £7 per single column cm, with a minimum of 3cm, for semi-display or 25p for Wordage, with a minimum of 30 words. For semi-display ads camera-ready artwork should be supplied. All prices stated exclude VAT. Copy deadline is the third Thursday of the month before publication. For further details of other advertising rates please request our rate card.
Visual Imagination (SB ads), 38 Melrose Avenue, Wimbledon Park, LONDON SW19 8BY.

ODYSSEY 7

ODYSSEY 7
UNIT 7, 1st FLOOR
UNIVERSITY PRECINCT
OXFORD RD/BOOTH ST. WEST
MANCHESTER
061 273 6666

ODYSSEY 7
UNIT 6
HARRISON ST
OFF VICAR LANE
(OPP. W.YORKS BUS STN.)
LEEDS
0532 426325
THE ABOVE TWO SHOPS SPECIALISE IN AMERICAN COMICS, SCIENCE FICTION, FILM/TV MATERIAL

ODYSSEY 7
MAGAZINE & POSTER CENTRE
21 HANGING DITCH
CORN EXCHANGE BUILDING
MANCHESTER 4
MAGS FOR EVERY INTEREST
SUPERB RANGE OF POSTERS
061 832 7044

THE PLACE
68 Worcester St, Wolverhampton. Tel: 0902 27627. Wolverhampton's biggest Comics and Fantasy Store. We stock Imports, Dungeons & Dragons, Doctor Who, S.F. Books, Toys & Games, Specialist Martial Arts, Bodybuilding and Computer magazines.

CATS IN SPACE

Starburst feature by PETER NEWALL

Peter Grimwade

"Producers are desperately insecure. They like to divide and rule", says TV writer and director, Peter Grimwade. In TV and Cinema there's many a slip between script and screen as he discovered when writing for *Doctor Who*. The result was *The Come-Uppance of Kaptain Katt*, a satirical thriller screened on ITV as part of the TVS 'Dramarama' series for children.

Frank – A masterish companion for the Kaptain

CAPTAIN KATT told of a popular TV Sci-Fi series whose central character is played by an obnoxious actor called Ludo French. The cast and crew want to write out the character and sack French but they can't because of the actor's power and the character's popularity. So they decide to literally kill him off.

All very interesting I'm sure, but why, you may ask, is *Starburst* covering a half-hour play for children? I asked the editor this very question.

Writer: Why are we covering a half-hour play for children?

Editor: Because it is funny and it has something to do with *Doctor Who.*

All becomes clear. I think.

Peter Grimwade has worked on *Doctor Who* with Jon (I've got a speed-boat and I'm going to use it) Pertwee, the great Tom 'Tom' Baker and that Vet. He directed such classics as 'Full Circle' (that one with Adric and the river fruits), 'Logopolis' (that one where 'Tom' fell off a wibbly radar dish) and 'Earthshock' (that one where Adric's bum got blasted half way across the universe). Then he wrote 'Timeflight' a story about a vet and two Concordes which get airnapped back to the dawn of time. As all Who fans will know, that production was beset by 'behind-the-scenes problems'. In other words enough bitchin' and a-snitchin' to put you off your corn-flakes. It was this kind of thing that formed the background to *Captain Katt.*

We can stick pins in him now!

Grimwade was at the opening of the Madame (Waxworks) Tussaud's *Doctor Who* exhibition. While he was looking at a dummy of 'Tom' some ungracious soul leant over and whispered "This is very useful because we can come and stick pins in him now". Ouch! So does that mean *Captain Katt* is a scathing attack on The Great One himself?

"The story was in no way a reflection on Tom", Grimwade asserts. "He is someone I admire enormously and not someone I would wish to stick pins in. I think he was the best Doctor ever. I like him as a person and I think he's a smashing actor. I didn't find him in any way difficult to work with. He's demanding but that's how it should be".

Back at the waxworks, Grimwade got the idea for "a kind of thriller" in which a TV production team wanted to kill off a series central character but couldn't because the network wanted him to stay.

The team decided to murder the lead actor with black magic – sticking pins in the image of the actor on display in a waxworks. In the end "the character died and a knife was found stuck in the back of the dummy". Pretty spooky eh?

At the beginning Grimwade wasn't thinking of a particular programme. "I thought of an idea coming out of the conflict between what happens on the screen in terms of the audience and fans and what is going on behind the scenes – the enormous conflict, particularly in a popular programme where the central character is personality orientated". So he started thinking of a personality orientated series. *Doctor Who* sprang to mind.

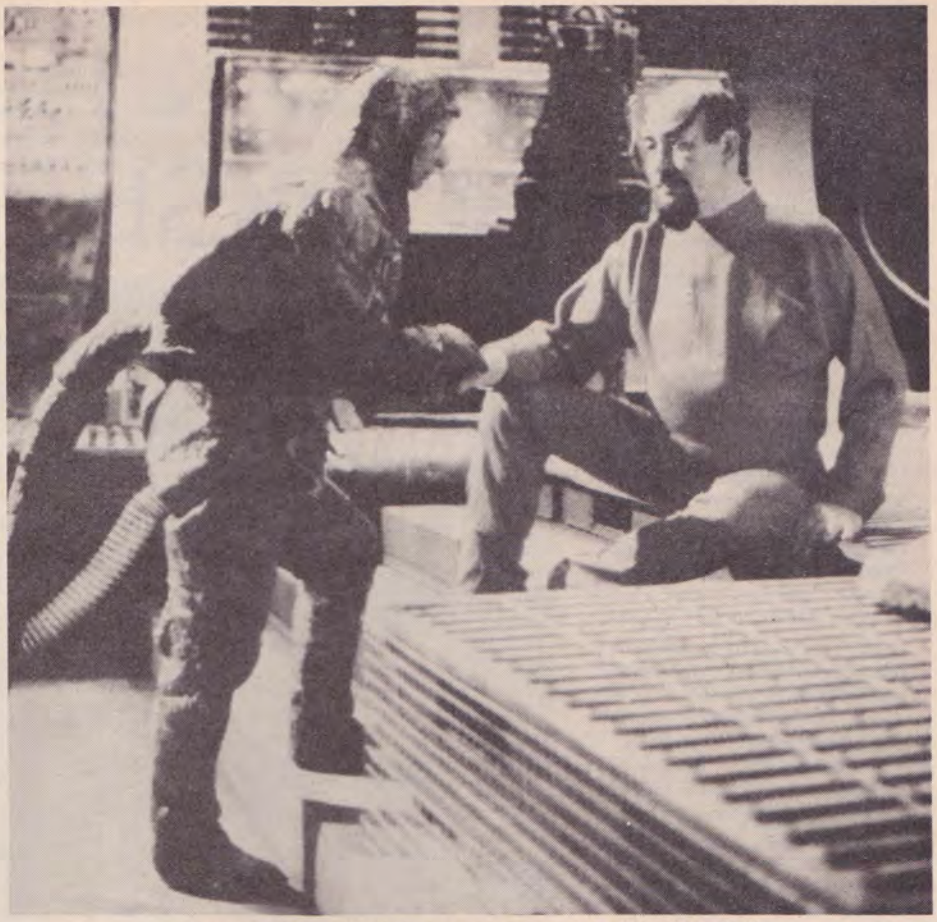
"It has a kind of relevance to *Doctor Who* because I knew the kind of shambles that went on behind the scenes – and also, looking at some 'Doctors', one saw the way these people, who had been in the acting profession a long time and had suddenly got this enormous amount of publicity and a bit of cash, were affected by that sort of exposure. I was just taking this to the absurd conclusion that they do become absolute monsters."

Terrible old ham

Oo-er! Does that mean the nastiest monster of *Doctor Who* is the Doctor?. "I'm not saying any of the Doctors were monsters, in any kind of way, but it can have adverse effects. Also I was interested in the fact that, like Ludo French who plays Captain Katt, they can be pretty bad actors as well. Ludo is a terrible old ham but he gets away with it in that situation".

From this premise Grimwade wrote a two-page story synopsis. While talking to John Dale of TVS, he mentioned the story. "He said 'send it to me', I did, he liked it". It was agreed from the start he would write and direct the play, not something they're too keen on at the meany Beeb. "I suppose you become in their eyes too powerful, a preposterous notion. A comment you often hear in some BBC departments is 'he's only the writer'. Producers turn around and say 'Don't listen to him he's only the writer', you get his work then hand it over to the director, manipulate the director and push the writer out. There was none of this with TVS". As Grimwade points out, "you direct something by writing it. By handing it over to another director it is re-written". Right. But even though he wrote and directed *Captain Katt* there were changes to be made in the story.

John Dale told Grimwade that in front of a children's audience at that time of day (4.45pm), they couldn't go for the occult suggestion that sticking knives in a dummy affected a real person. The IBA would be down on them like a ton of bricks. So "a bit more slapstick" was added, "a running gag with Frank, the companion, and Ludo playing the inspector – originally a separate character who was trying to find out what was going on. It was John's idea to say, because of Ludo's paranoia, he could put on this Agatha Christie type disguise and find out for himself who was attacking him and what people thought of him. This added more and more twists. It became dense – dangerously so I think".



Frank and Kaptain Katt (or Ludo French or Alfred Marks!)

Another change came right at the end of the story. Instead of blowing-up the dummy of French it was distintegrated with a *Doctor Who* gizmo. There were two reasons for this, Grimwade explains, "It was technically difficult so there wasn't time to do it. Also I got permission from 'Madame Tussauds' to use them by name as opposed to just saying 'the waxworks'. Of course they were scared about suggesting people could get in and blow up dummies. They thought it could be the thin end of the wedge, people might come in and blow up dummies of Margaret Thatcher. Although I don't think many of the IRA watch 'Dramarama'."

Explosive!

But there were enough explosions for everyone. "At one stage, the director (in the play) had to spill his coffee over the vision mixing bank. The electricians had offered to put a 'flash pot' into the dummy bit of the desk. Reflecting the general enthusiasm, they put rather a lot. Rather than the slight 'phut' and 'fizz' which I wanted there was a bloody great explosion. It terrified the actors and shocked the camera crew. And if that wasn't bad enough the smoke triggered the fire alarm. About ten minutes later there were three fire engines outside". Then there was the outside broadcast unit. "The OB unit we expected to use, which was a very good state-of-the-art Sony unit, blew up before production began. They had to pull in some incredibly ancient disused equipment from Southampton which looked as if it had last seen action during the Coronation".

Katt was recorded at the 'alternative' TVS studios – a converted cinema in Gillingham. The studio's cameras, gallery etc. were used for those of Great Western Television, the company which produces 'Captain Katt' in the play. The play was recorded with an OB unit, the real gallery was a van parked outside. "There was some debate about where the Great Western Television Company were situated. Any resemblance to a Plymouth-based company is strenuously denied".

Grimwade feels writing and directing the play had many advantages. It was technically difficult but, because he wrote it, he knew how the scenes could work, "and I must say, from the point of view of the actors, it was wonderful. One was never on trial as one often is in the first few days of rehearsal. You know 'Who is this director? What's he like?' One went in with credit because they liked the script and assumed you must know what you're doing because you wrote the thing".

Grimwade now has two other 'projects' in the works: a "science fantasy type book" and "a science fantasy adventure series". It's been in development over a year, a lot of money has been spent, we've got quite a few scripts but it needs international backing. It would appeal to the same kind of audience as *Doctor Who.*

Until then Sci-Fi fans can look forward to a new season of *Doctor Who* with Colin (boring, boring) Baker and Bonnie (frightwig) Langford a-whooshing and a-swooshing about the galaxy. How many science fantasies will that inspire? ■

Fantasy & Horror BOOKSHELF

Presented by David Howe

James Herbert needs no introduction to readers of this column so we'll launch straight in with his most recent offering.

MOON

By James Herbert
Published by New English Library 1986
312pp £2.95

Moon is the latest in the long line of paperbacks to come from the popular pen of top horror novelist James Herbert and is possibly his best novel to date.

It is very different in style from his previous book, Domain, in that the menace is a slow and insidious one rather than tangibly obvious. Here we have suspense in a progression of events; a good story, without the Herbert 'trademarks' of irrelevant chapters in which characters get killed-off and needlessly graphic descriptions of mutilation and mayhem.

The plot revolves around Jonathan Childes, a teacher living on the Channel Islands. Childes has a latent psychic talent which allowed him to help the police on mainland Britain track down a mass child murderer. Childes first 'saw' where the bodies of the murdered children were, and then where the murderer was. This led to him being hounded by the press and placed under suspicion by certain parties of having killed the kids himself. All this became too much for him and he left his wife and child and went to live in peace and quiet on the Channel Islands.

All goes well for Childes until he begins having 'sightings' again. He finds himself witnessing murders through the eyes of the killer, a creature he can only describe as 'It', such is the evil that permeates his thoughts during the visions. He makes contact with the policeman who believed in him and helped him before, and between them they try to track down this new killer, whose trademark is a small moonstone inside the gutted bodies of its victims. Soon though, the killer realises that Childes is 'watching' and so inexorably closes in on him and his loved ones, taunting him with visions.

The plot is gripping, if a little predictable, and for once does not rely on the murders to move the book along. In all, only three actual murders are 'witnessed' by Childes, and the gruesome details are kept to a minimum. This is excellent as the writing and plot do not need any overly descriptive passages – both are superb in themselves.

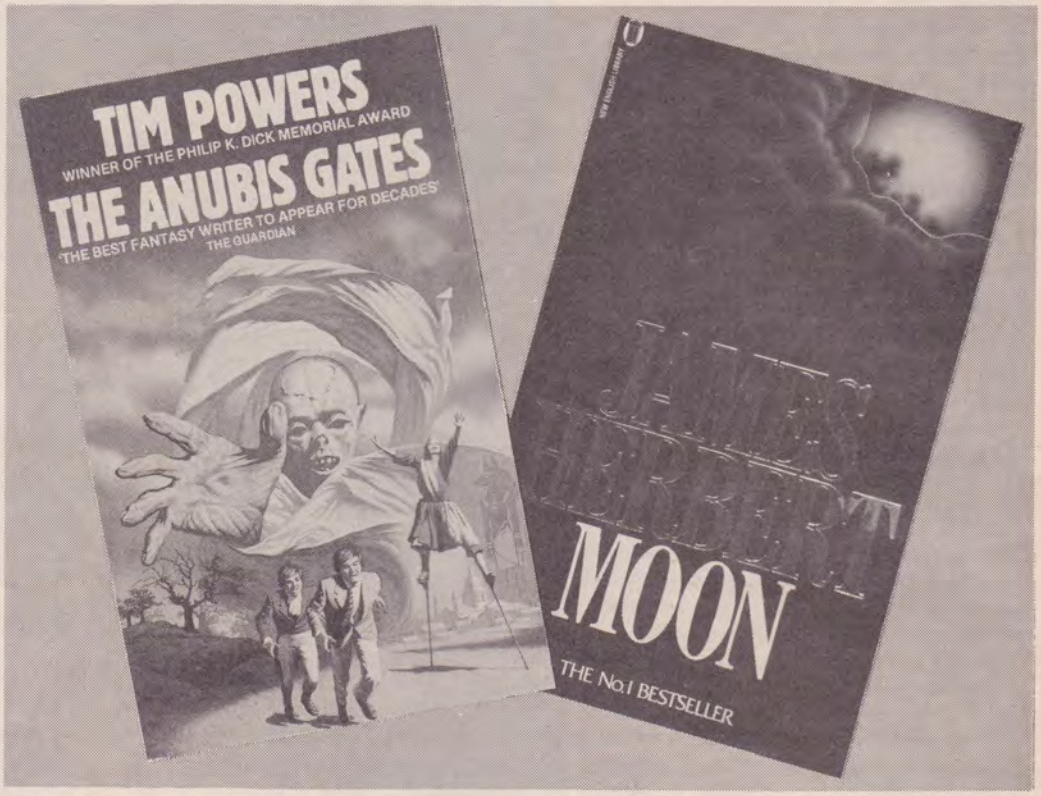
As with any murder mystery, the book is populated by likely suspects and, in perhaps the book's only defect, none of them turned out to be the killer. This disappointed me as I had several definite suspects as well as thinking at one point that the killer was some supernatural moon-force, but this theory was proved wrong as well.

One other small criticism is that the headmistress of the college where Childes worked, Miss Piprelly, was supposed to have a psychic talent of her own. This was never really expanded on and it seemed superfluous to even mention it.

Despite these minor gripes, the book is a worthy addition to ones horror library and possibly marks a change in direction for Herbert as his new hardback, The Magic Cottage, does not appear, through publicity at least, to be an overt horror-tale either.

David J. Howe

I was grabbed by this next book in much the same way as the reviewer. It really is a superb read and comes highly recommended.



THE ANUBIS GATES

By Tim Powers
Published by Grafton Books 1986
464pp £2.95

Every so often a book comes along which grabs your attention and makes you want to tell everyone how wonderful it is. *The Anubis Gates* by Tim Powers is such a book. There are currently two different paperback editions circulating in the bookshops, each having a different cover. One shows two men running away from a clown on stilts, with a ghostly Egyptian mummy reaching out menacingly over their heads. The other (published by Chatto) is a symbolic/surrealistic painting showing a clown and a clockface. So, is it a period horror story or a more serious novel? Well, the truth is *The Anubis Gates* is a little of both and a great deal of something else.

The plot concerns Brendan Doyle, a lecturer on nineteenth century poets who is hired by eccentric millionaire J. Cochran Darrow to accompany a party of scholars back to the year 1810 to meet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The scholars are paying heavily for the privilege, a scheme dreamed up by Darrow to gain money to further finance his secret time-travel experiments.

Doyle is willing to go along as a guide so he can privately discover information on the little-known poet William Ashbless. The problems start almost as soon as they arrive, when Doyle is kidnapped by an Egyptian sorceror who wants the secret of time-travel. Over the course of the novel Doyle is pursued by a number of people including the sorceror, Doctor Romanelli and his unnatural clone Doctor Romany, Darrow himself (whose plans are stranger than anyone could have guessed), and the stilted clown Horrabin who rules half the beggars in London through magic and torture (and, it is said, cripples the beggars who work for him to make the passers-by more sympathetic). Even when he tries to meet Ashbless and enlist his help he discovers that the man is not where 'history' apparently says he is. Added to this, Doyle soon realises that he knows exactly when and how he himself will die.

The brilliant thing about *The Anubis Gates* is that no matter how much of the plot I give away, it won't be spoiled. There are an incredible number of twists in it, yet paradoxically it is written so well that the plot is always easy to follow. The period detail is so well integrated with the narrative that you begin to wonder how much of it

is really true. Was there really a William Ashbles? And was the 'Dancing Ape Madness', where strange fur-covered humans burst into rooms and died in convulsions on the ground, a real occurrence which Powers has used, or has he invented it? I've read this book twice now, and writing this review has made me want to go back and re-read it again. If someone forced me to make a criticism, there is a middle section set in Egypt that contributes little to the narrative and loses some of the tension generated in the alleys and sewers of Regency London, and the police constables in the book shouldn't be around for another eighteen years, but these are minor flaws in an otherwise brilliant book. What can I say? It's quite simply the best book I have read for a number of years. Buy it!

Andrew Lane

Our final selection also comes highly recommended, although it is difficult to know which category it falls into.

WALKING ON GLASS

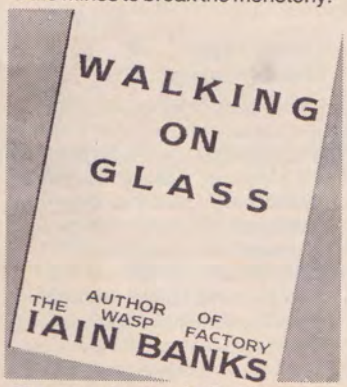
By Iain Banks
Published by Futura Books
1986
239pp £1.95

Walking on Glass is only Iain Banks' second book and already he ranks very highly in my estimation as a writer. His first novel, *The Wasp Factory* (reviewed in *Starburst* No.89), was a minor masterpiece and he has managed with this second offering to equal the power of his first.

This is a well structured book. It has five sections and a conclusion, each section being split into three chapters. The first chapter of each section is named after roads: Theobald's Road, Rosebery Avenue and so on. These chapters follow the fortunes of a young artist called Graham Park who is madly in love with a mysterious and beautiful girl called Sara Ffitch. The chapters refer to the roads he is walking down to get to her flat and in each chapter we learn a little more about him and her and their strange relationship.

The second chapter of each section is a person's name: Mr Smith, Clerk Starke, Mrs Short etc. These chapters are about a singularly peculiar individual called Steven Grout. Grout believes that he is an alien who has been trapped on Earth by The Tormentors who are out to break his will by such means as income tax forms, social security procedures, and all the other niggling problems that are collectively known as life. He thinks that cars have lasers mounted in their axles and so to avoid them he holds his breath when he walks, only steps on the cracks between the paving stones and only pauses for breath standing on a wall, or behind a parked car where the axle-lasers cannot get him. Grout's life has to be read to be believed and these chapters describe his meetings with the aforementioned people.

The final chapter in each section is the name of a game: One-Dimensional Chess, Open-Plan Go, Spotless Dominoes and so on. These are the games being played by an old man, Quiss, and an old woman, Ajayi, in an ancient, sprawling, crumbling castle made of slate, glass and books. The castle is situated on a barren snowy wasteland with only the slate mines to break the monotony.



The couple are both prisoners, condemned to play the games for an accidental killing during the Therapeutic Wars. With each game they complete, they must attempt to answer the question "What happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object?" If they answer correctly, they go free. If not, they play another game.

The book is really three very different stories about three very different people. However, all the stories are related as the reader discovers, and that discovery is so wonderfully plotted that it left me shaking my head in wonder at this masterpiece of writing.

My only reservation is that perhaps the book is just too 'different' to be the huge success that it deserves to be. All I can do is recommend it highly. It makes you laugh, it makes you sad, but most importantly it makes you think, and that cannot be said about many books these days.

David J. Howe

Now on to our monthly round-up of new and future releases. Futura have the novelisation of the forthcoming *Aliens* film by Alan Dean Foster; a new selection of short stories by Larry Niven, *Limits*, and a new novel from the author of the Shannara books, Terry Brooks, *Magic Kingdom, For Sale/Sold!* New English Library have the latest horror novel from the author of *The Keep*, F. Paul Wilson, *The Tomb* and Michael Moorcock's *The Rituals of Infinity.* Grafton Books on the other hand have the novelisation of *Highlander* by Garry Douglas; Piers Anthony's new *Incarnations of Immortality* novel, *With a Tangled Skein;* another Moorcock, *The Runestaff;* Ramsey Campbell's *Obsession;* Robert Bloch, author of *Psycho*, has a new horror novel, *The Night of the Ripper;* and one of Asimov's collections of crime fiction, *Banquets of the Black Widowers.*

Iain Banks displays a copy of 'Walking on Glass' at an autograph session

FEEDBACK

Starburst Letters
Visual Imagination
38 Melrose Avenue
Wimbledon Park
London SW19 8BY

Bits & Pieces

Eddie Maddock
Twickenham

It's amazing, the bits of information you can pick up at your local specialist shop. Only t'other day I was in 'Forbidden Planet 2' when I overheard a conversation between a customer and one of the 'fountains of knowledge' behind the counter. And, apparently, it's good news for George Romero fans everywhere because, as I heard it, "Day of the Dead" *will* be released in this country, although it's uncertain as to whether it'll go straight onto video, or get a couple of cinema showings first. But before all you grannies and children start dancing in the streets to a Goblin sound-track – the bad news – it seems the BBFC have cut a few bits out, six minutes' worth

Hell, I knew there'd be *some* snipping of the old scissors, but six minutes? That's an excessive amount in anyone's book. Sick? The complete, uncensored version of the movie couldn't make me feel as sick as I do right now. As a previous reader suggested on the letters page a while back, interview the BBFC if at all possible. I, for one, would like to know what makes them tick. (Hopefully, it's a parcel bomb.)

And while I'm in such an informative mood, I advise everyone to check out their local video shop as the posters for "Explorers' have started to appear. It's either available as I write this, or about to be released.

Film Chart

Anthony Stevenson
Lordswood, Southampton

I often wonder about the many peculiar things in our world. I wonder when Channel 4 are finally going to find a regular time slot for "The Twilight Zone". I wonder if the Cannon Group love movies so much, why can't they ever treat them with respect. I wonder where on earth has the 'Fantasy Film Chart' got to this year.

I doubt *Starburst* can help me on the first two ponderings, but I'm sure they can on the third.

Dennis Taylor
Melton Mowbray, Leics.

I have been reading *Starburst* since Issue 1 back in 1977. During that time I have seen the quality of the magazine rise and fall. Since Visual Imagination took over publication *Starburst* has improved enormously and I congratulate the team on this improvement. I have only one point to make, have you dropped the annual fantasy film chart, the 1985 chart appeared in the July 1985 issue. I have always enjoyed the chart which has given me a chance to see how all the year's new films have compared with the older entries.

Please don't drop the chart and I would hope to see the 1986 edition in a late issue.

Surface Gloss

Matthew Blandford
Upper Shirley, Southampton

I know you like to receive comments on your magazine, whether good or bad, so I felt I just had to send you mine. Unfortunately, most of my views are of a negative kind. 'Marvel' were certainly putting *Starburst* through an agonising death and when Visual Imagination took over I couldn't wait for the improvement. I'm still waiting.

Over the past nine issues we have seen article after article on old forgotten British TV series, the episodes of which mostly don't even exist any more. A bit of retrospect is welcomed and sometimes it is better to diversify away from "The Prisoner" and "The Avengers" which have been covered extensively elsewhere. But many of your articles have been so trivial that they've hardly been worth reading. Surely we all know about the banned "Star Trek" episodes already. We don't need an essay asking whether we'll ever seen them or not because they can be found at our local video library. And as for "The Black Adder" and asking us to consider your covering "Dallas" . . . well!

***Highlander* – Our ticket winners enjoy the preview**

I feel you are just skimming over the fantasy of today merely so you can cover it in retrospect in five years time or so. Certainly you've given us coverage of "Fright Night", "Re-Animator" and "Robin of Sherwood" (oh, too, too much of "Robin of Sherwood") but it all seems so superficial. What happened to all the in-depth gritty interviews with the SPFX men and make-up artists and the on-location reports you used to do? Recent interviews seem like a few questions asked at an autograph session!

The most noticeable decline in *Starburst*, and I think most of your readers would agree with me, is to be found in 'Things to Come'. After the disappearance of John Brosnan (but I thank you for explaining that there isn't much you can do about this at present), it has become so spaced out and empty (in quantity and in character) that it looks as though you received your information from a free cinema promo leaflet, though recently I have actually found more in one of these than in 'Things to Come'. Put Tony Crawley back on the job. He was always more up to date, always able to fill up four close type pages with relevant information and always enjoyable to read with his witty writing style. At present, the excellent Alan Jones is more reliable in his 'Preview'.

So please *Starburst*, knock off the surface gloss and bring back the depth that made your magazine the best in its field. If you must keep looking back, and I hope you do so long as you don't give it priority over present and future fantasy, why not do something *Starburst* has been promising to do ever since it started? Give a good critical analysis of "The Exorcist".

Highlander Preview

Mrs L. Kett
E. Dulwich, London

I had to write and say thank you for sending me tickets to one of the most entertaining films I have seen this year, namely "The Highlander".

I really enjoyed the film, I admit that I didn't expect to and that I only went to see it for two reasons. First, who'd pass up a free film, and second, Christopher Lambert. But I have to say that it surprised me a lot. Although it is not an Oscar-winning film it is pure entertainment, what more could

No. 88 – A photo feature on "The Bride", the banned "Star Trek" episodes (part 1)., Costume designer Emma Porteus, "The Tripods" star John Shackley interviewed. "The Black Cauldron" and "Doctor Who" on radio.

No. 89 – "Lifeforce", "Back To The Future", "Amazing Stories", the making of BBC's "Alice In Wonderland", on location with "The Tripods", and Vere Lorrimer talks about the funny side of "Blake's Seven".

No. 90 – Films of 85 reviewed. The Daleks are Brains in Boxes. Computer Special Effects. "Black Adder". 1985 "Timeslip". Warner Brothers and "Back To The Future" colour centre-spread.

ISSUE 91
Time-Travel Special: Timeslip, The Time Machine, Sapphire and Steel – time-travel on TV, including the Daleks, Re-Animator Producer Brian Yuzna interview. Dreamchild feature. Fright Night, Remo-Williams, Teen Wolf, The Stuff, previewed.

ISSUE 92
Robin of Sherwood: Looking back, and forwards to season three. Wes Craven talks about his Nightmare On Elm Street. Films of '85 – Poll Results. Previews of Jewel of the Nile, Young Sherlock Holmes, DARYL and Zone Troopers. Features on Commando, The Silent Earth, The Champions and Return of the Antelope.

ISSUE 93
Jason Connery, Arnold Schwarzenegger interviews. Jewel of the Nile, Fright Night and Zone Troopers features. Previews of Flesh and Blood, The Hitcher, The Clan of the Cave Bear, My Science Project, The Legend of Orion and Starchaser, Return of the Jedi on video.

ISSUE 94
Leading fantasy artist Chris Achilleos. Clan of the Cave Bear make-up artist Michael Westmore interview. Animating Superted. Peter Cushing's life in fantasy. A look at V. Enemy Mine, Static, Clue and House previewed. The Rocky Horror Picture Show phenomenon goes on. Into The Labyrinth retrospect.

ISSUE 95
Interviews with Judi Trott, Marion in Robin of Sherwood, and Enemy Mine director Wolfgang Petersen. Highlander, Bliss and Explorers previews. An early look ahead to Star Trek IV. Review and background to Enemy Mine. The Greatest American Hero feature. Hammer Films: Hands of the Ripper. The NFT TVSF weekend.

ISSUE 96
Marc Lenard of Star Trek interviewed, and Lou Gossett of Enemy Mine, Highlander and Biggles features. Fantasy Spies and more on Hammer Films.

Back issues of 'Starburst' cost £1.20 plus 30p for postage and packing. Some issues are in limited supply so order while stocks last. Only those mentioned are available at present. Cheques and Postal Orders payable to "Visual Imagination"

Issues required .....

Amount enclosed .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

..... **Postcode** .....

Post to: 'Starburst' Back Issues,

38 Melrose Avenue, Wimbledon Park, LONDON SW19 8BY

one ask? And when it officially opens here, I'l probably go and see it again. So please pass on my congratulations, best wishes and thanks to all concerned for a very enjoyable Sunday.

Kind of Magic

Simon Foster

I feel I must write and thank you for the chance to see "Highlander" the other Sunday. I greatly enjoyed the film, and I now have a very high opinion of both Russell Mulcahy and Christopher Lambert.

Mulcahy is obviously a very stylish director who can move from rock videos to giant pigs to immortals with ease. I wonder what he'll try next?

Lambert's strange accent (he's starting to sound like Schwarzenegger as his European origins face) was perfect for the part of someone who has lived in different times as well well as different countries. A very believable performance as a man in the unusual situation of having outlived his loved ones time and again.

Sean Connery did seem rather wasted playing Ben Kenovi to Lambert's Luke, even turning up after he'd been killed to explain a few unresolved plot points. His final battle with the Kurgan and Connery's always impeccable performance more than made up for this.

I had hoped that thing about 'the quickening' would turn out to be some incredible power the immortals have, but it quickly disappeared from the script, along with Ramirez (in his more solid form, at least).

Clancy Brown came off very well as a real scum-bag, and deserved everything he got in the visually stunning finale (pity about the wire). Incidentally, page 50 of SB96 says there is a picture of Clancy Brown on page 2 of SB95. Are you kidding?

All in all a very exciting, enjoyable and amusing film, particularly thanks to Messrs Mulcahy and Lambert. They both have that special something that makes a cult film.

It's a kind of magic.

Praising 'Enemy'

D. Watkins
Swaffham, Norfolk

Some time ago I wrote to your magazine tearing apart a film ("Dune"). I thought that it was about time I wrote in praise of one.

That film is "Enemy Mine". It was nice to see a thoughtful and, to some degree, intelligent space opera. "Enemy Mine" has something for everyone (well, almost everyone). One of the most breathtaking dogfights I have ever seen (and I have seen a few), tension, humour and plenty of action. The alien world of Fynne IV is as convincing, as the city-scape of Los Angeles in "Blade Runner", helped enormously by ILM's, as usual, flawless effect's work.

But it would be remiss of me to forget the film's two most important ingredients, Louis Gossett Jnr as Jeriba Shigan, the Drac, and Dennis Quaid as Willis E. Davidge, the human. Their scenes together were easily the highspots of the film. Shigan may have been a man in a suit but you would have had a hard time convincing me of that. Come Oscar time I would like to see these two gentlemen rewarded for two of the richest performances the genre has turned out in a long time (but of course, we all know it won't happen).

I am only sorry that the UK version was cut by some twenty minutes – because it shows. So much happens in the last sixteen minutes or so, one can't help feeling that a few details and a lot of dialogue had been cut from that section. And in places the film appears to jump untidily from scene to scene.

This minor quibble aside, I thoroughly enjoyed "Enemy Mine" and look forward to Wolfgang Peterson's next film.

Big Names

Dino Vessalio
Bungay, Suffolk

I would like to see more interviews, perhaps with the big stars such as Steven Spielberg, John Carpenter and Stephen King, all of which have written or directed for films or books, and who have recently released a certain film or book. I think an interview with Stephen King would be most interesting since he has become one of the top horror writers of today. Also the very popular film-maker Steven Spielberg. I would like to know of his future work on the up-coming Indiana Jones film. So let's see some interviews in future issues of *Starburst.*

Too Good to Cut Up?

Julian Carter
Altrincham, Chesshire

The difference between the Marvel version of *Starburst,* and the much improved Visual Imagination copy is easy to see, even without reading the magazine. As soon as the magazine is opened a full, glossy photograph of "Commando" springs from the page. And Visual Imagination have even accounted for Chinese readers, when reading from the back a scene from "King Solomon's Mines" followed by Michael J. Fox in "Teenwolf". Unfortunately *Starburst* is so good that the cover and pictures of films like "Fright Night" and "Re-Animator" can't be removed in case of ruining the copy.

I found that the review on the 1970s series "Timeslip" slightly marred issue 91. It was uninteresting and boring. I was also annoyed to find that when "Re-Animator" is shown in England it will be censored. It makes you wonder how far the censors will go to spoil a very high-quality film.

Referring to Gavin MacCallum's letter for more British coverage I would like to see something on the Hammer films and perhaps an article on 'Hammer House of Mystery and Suspense'. It would make a change from "Tripods" and "Doctor Who".

***Cocoon* – Over-rated hype?**

Superb Article!

Dylan Cox
London

I am writing to half pat Mr Dupont's back for offering us, in SB95, a superb article concerning women who have "adorned the world of Sci-fi and fantasy movies". I half pat him because I mean it: I must disagree with Mr Dupont's opinions about 'Aliens' finale. Ripley, who as you mentioned was originally going to be a male character, is hardly erotic as she undresses and prepares herself for hyper-sleep. I would say that had Ripley been played by a male, Mr Dupont wouldn't have called this scene erotic. Ripley is simply taking her clothes off, the fact that she is a female is purely coincidental. However, having said that, I must congratulate Mr Dupont for including in his article a direct quote from Sigourney Weaver who points out that "there is rarely a script in which a woman can keep her clothes on", but then again, it's only a movie!

Cocoon

James Jones
Goodmayes, Essex

I have written before regarding two American film-makers who seem to have hypnotised the American public into believing anything they touch *is* gold, namely Messrs Stallone and Spielberg, so this time I'll change the subject and let them get on with whatever it is they do. I never got to see 'Cocoon' at the cinema, but I've just seen it on video and would like to say to anyone who hasn't seen it yet – don't bother.

'Cocoon' did very well in America, and arrived here with the usual 'hype' that tends to surround this duo's SS films. The story is weak, there's a few 'novelty ideas' thrown in and it has the usual happy, and more often than never, predictable ending. I know that will probably get a few backs up, but the quality of a lot of American films being exported here is very poor. If this is the only type of film that makes a lot of money and receives good reviews, then other directors and backers will follow suit and we will probably be stuck with this type of film, this may be the reason some of the better British films do so badly in America.

Meeting People

P. Sayer
Kirkstall, Leeds

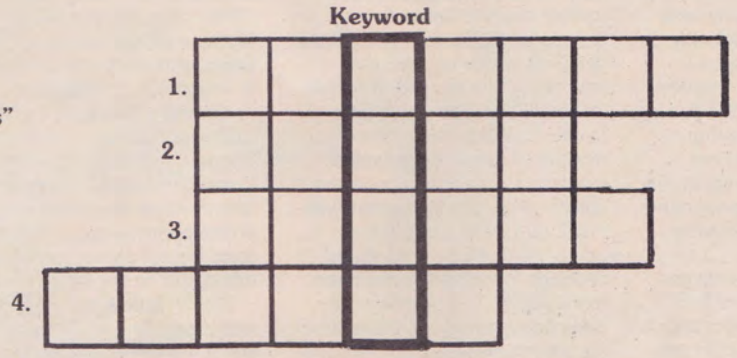
I was pleased to read in the current issue of *Starburst* of reader Nicholas Gadds meeting with one of my favourite actors, Peter Cushing. He is very lucky I have wanted to meet Mr Cushing for many years and also write to him but I have been unable to find an address. Perhaps Feedback could help me on that.

COMPETITION

This is the second of a three-part competition for which we have a great prize lined up which is being announced later. DON'T do anything with the answers yet. You need to keep them safely until you have the next issue of *Starburst*. ALL of the answers can be found in this issue and form the keywords.

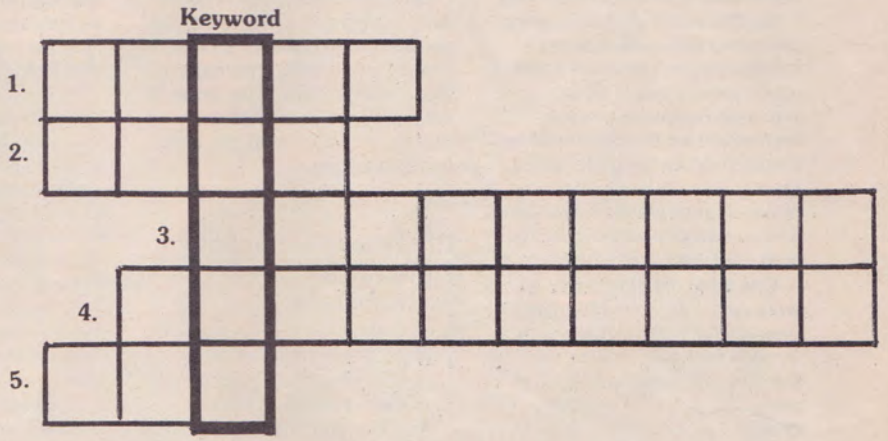
Keyword C

1. Star of "Highlander"
2. Visual Effects Supervisor of "Aliens"
3. Star of "Enemy Mine"
4. Director of "Alien"



Keyword D

1. Number associated with Blake
2. Script writer who has left "Doctor Who"
3. Old television fantasy series covered in previous *Starburst*
4. Most recent screened Anderson series
5. Anderson series that proved disconcerting at the NFT



Whoops! A slight mistake occurred with Keyword B in last issue. The table should have allowed only five characters for question five (ie lose the last two). Also the answer to question six should have extended two more characters!

The Prize

STARBURST offers you the chance to spend a day on the set of a major new fantasy production. The winner of the 'Keyword' competition currently running in *Starburst* will win the once in a lifetime opportunity to meet the stars, the director and the special effects crew of *Hellraiser*, the new multi-million co-production from New World Pictures and Virgin Films to be released next Summer.

Hellraiser marks the much anticipated directorial début of Clive Barker, the award-winning author of 'The Books of Blood' and screenplay writer of Empire Pictures' *Underworld* and the *Rawhead Rex*. The new film, written by Barker and based on his soon to be published novel 'The Hellbound Heart', cunningly unravels the intriguing tale of love, lust and demonic dealings centred around the house at No 55 Lodovico Street – an address destined to be as well known as the one on Elm Street. Join the unhappily married couple of Larry and Julia as they move into their new house and find themselves fighting the evil Cenobites who have condemned his brother Frank to a living hell of endless suffering and blood-lust in the search for the ultimate possession – a new human skin.

Be the guest of producer Christopher Figg, director Clive Barker, *Highlander*'s Bob Keen (designer of the innovative and gory special make-up effects) and *Xtro*'s Chris Hobbs who will be delighted to answer any questions you may have regarding their unique craft, and witness the birth of a potential blockbuster first hand. And in the process have a great day out with the *Starburst* team.

Although I have never met Peter Cushing I did however get to meet, recently, my all-time favourite fantasy pin-up – Caroline Munro. After years of following Caroline's career I finally got to meet her at a charity show held in aid of handicapped children at Leeds Town Hall. Half way through the show, on which Caroline was acting as hostess, I left my seat and headed back-stage. I was amazed how easy it was as I walked straight into the dressing room without being challenged by security or anyone. After first knocking I went in to see the gorgeous girl herself, and believe me, Caroline Munro is even more beautiful in person than on the screen and so friendly.

We talked about her films and current work, future plans and also the chances of a Starcrash II. Even Stella Starr herself did not seem very optimistic on that one.

So that was that. After signing my autograph book shaking hands and giving me a wonderfully warm smile it was time to go. Although Caroline gave the impression we could have talked longer I had an uncomfortable feeling Security were going to make an appearance before long and so I happily returned to my seat – a dream come true.

One thing did puzzle me, where were all the *Starburst* readers? I expected to have to push my way through to meet Caroline. Was I the only one at this event – just me and Caroline in an empty dressing room?

Damn! I wish I'd remembered to take my camera.

Creep II!

Dino Vessalio
Bungay, Suffolk

I have just finished reading issue 95 of *Starburst* magazine, and without doubt it was truly wonderful, thank you. The column 'It's Only a Movie', was very interesting, the subject of women in the movies was a nice attempt to say something about the females in our beloved fantasy movies, and as a result of it, the column was very successful with me. I agree with most of the points which Mr Dupont stated, although there could have been more pages. The photos were quite good, but again, there could have been more.

My final comment, or should I call it a request, is that could you please have a photo of Kathleen Turner, in full colour (perhaps in that red dress from 'The Jewel of the Nile'). And, yes, Kathleen Turner does appeal to me, and again thank you.

Did I really write that!

Phillip Twiner
Slough, Berkshire

What a funny feeling I got when I saw my letter printed in SB95. Did I really write all that? I swear I was not drunk at the time! Honest!

The 'Captain Scarlet' feature in 'TV Zone' (SB93) was very interesting to read. I caught an episode a few weeks ago ('Big Ben Strikes Thirteen') on LWT. That was the first time I'd seen the series since the 1970s when it was last repeated.

I'm afraid I found it all a bit corny! Especially at the start when that deep butch voice drones: "This is the voice of the Mysterons" etc, etc, etc . . . Uggh! wince! wince! But it was all so technically brilliant as Gerry Anderson's TV series usually are.

Doesn't Colin Baker look haggard in that photo in 'Things to Come' in issue 94. Oh dear, Joan Simms looks like she's pregnant on the opposite page. Will the good Doctor deliver the baby himself. Is he the father?

The 'V' article in the same issue was great. One of the best things about the series was the constant bitching between Diana and Lydia as they stood there, hands on hips, hurling insults at each other with their gleaming red lips.

It still puzzles me as to how Marc Singer managed to get into those 'oh-so-tight' jeans of his! My God, he must have been in agony all the time. I bet they had to use a shoe-horn!

The feature on the make-up of 'Clan of the Cave Bear' was most interesting. I've just seen the film and thought it was really good. It's the only film to date that honestly portrays life as it may have been at that point in our history. Go see it, you won't be disappointed.

Starburst 95 is your best yet! From the great front cover, to the 'eye-pleasing' new layout for 'Things to Come' – to the witty 'buzzing around' one-liner on 'The Fly'. (Did any one manage to stay awake for the recent BBC 1 screening of the film?).

To the photo taken at the 'Monster Con' of the Doctor Who convention in Merseyside. Blimey, is that Bill Russell? Carol Ann Ford doesn't look a day older does she? Who's that 'Robot Kojak' creature in the background . . . oops, sorry! it's the cyber-controller! – pardon me sir!

What a surprise to see 'Hands of the Ripper' featured. It's about time someone did a retrospective on this film; and you did it very well I must say.

At last, the very first photos of 'Star Trek IV'. You've actually beaten 'Starlog' to it, well done.

Another splendid feature in 95 was 'Past Visions of the Future'. Most welcome. My favourite is UFO (about time they re-ran that).

An interesting read was the review of 'Doctor Who – the early years' and I agree with the reviewer in everything he says ab out the book.

It's a shame when you finish reading it because you want there to be more. What a treat it was to be taken back to the good old early days of 'Doctor Who' and try and recapture the atmosphere and spirit of the series – pure nostalgia.

Yes, all in all, SB95 is the best – keep this up and you can't go far wrong. Bye for now!

Robin of Sherwood

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MISS A COPY

Subscribe to *Starburst* and ensure some exciting times are delivered to your door every month.

STARBURST **subscription rates**
UK £15.00 per year
US $28.00 per year
Cheques/Postal Orders payable to VISUAL IMAGINATION

Remittance enclosed £ .....

Please start subscription with issue .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Visual Imagination
38 Melrose Avenue, Wimbledon Park, London SW19 8BY

BAR